

THE
SPIRITUAL COMBAT.

To which is added,

The PEACE of the SOUL,
AND THE
HAPPINESS of a HEART
WHICH DIES TO ITSELF
IN ORDER
TO LIVE TO GOD.

The Life of Man is a Warfare. Job. vii. ver. 1.

Done into ENGLISH by J. T.

BIRMINGHAM:

Printed by T. HOLLIWELL, at the Roebuck, Moor-Street.

M,DCC,LXIX.





P R E F A C E.

TH E following Treatise comprehends in a concise Manner the whole System of a devout Life, gathered from the Maxims of the Gofpel; particularly those which regard Humility and Self-denial.

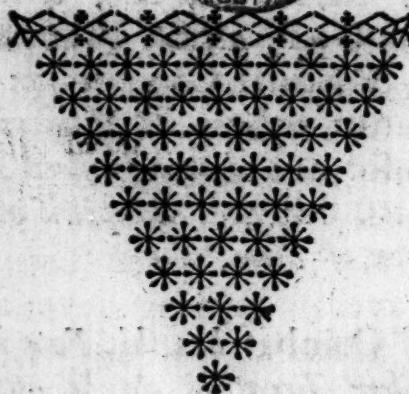
Among an Infinity of Encomiums which might be cited in its Commendation, let it suffice to say, that one of the greatest Saints these latter Ages have produced, St. Francis of Sales, for upwards of twenty Years carried this Book about him, and never failed reading some Pages of it every Day: He called it his Director, and recommended it to all those who consulted Him in the great Affair of Salvation. And though that excellent Book the Imitation of Christ, like this, tends to unite the Soul entirely to God; yet St. Francis gave the Preference to the Spiritual Combat for this Reason, because the latter reduces its Maxims to Practice; whereas the former contains indeed Abundance of choice Sentiments, but does not point out the immediate Application of them.

The Spiritual Combat has this Fate in common with several excellent Treatises, to be attributed to various Authors: What appears most probable in regard of this Tract is, that the first Sketch of it was

P R E F A C E

was from the Pen of D. John de Castanissa, a Spanish Benedictine; but that the finishing Hand, with very great Additions, was put to it by D. Laurence Scupoli, a Theatine of Italy.

As the Author, whoever he was, has laid down a Plan; which, if duly followed, will lead to the most consummate Sanctity; Persons who live in the World, may imagine such Spirituality too refined for their Practice. But this may be depended on, that no one can read this little Tract without reaping great Advantage from it, in whatever State of Life he is placed, And if in the Pursuit of human Arts and Sciences, we are fond of learning under the greatest Masters, though we have very little Hopes of attaining their Perfection. certainly the same Rule ought to direct our Choice with regard to the Science of the Saints, which, at least in some Degree, is absolutely necessary for the Salvation of our Souls.



THE
SPIRITUAL COMBAT.

No one shall be crown'd who hath not fought well.

2. Tim. iii.

C H A P. I.

In what Christian Perfection consists: We must fight in order to attain it: Four Things necessary for obtaining the Victory.

IF you seek, O Christian Soul, to attain the highest Pitch of *Evangelical Perfection*, and unite yourself so closely with God, as to become one *Spirit* with him; it is requisite, in order to succeed in a Design the most sublime that can be express'd or imagined, that you be first acquainted with the true Nature and Perfection of *Spirituality*.

Some, who only judge by Appearances, make it consist in penitential Works, in Hair-Shirts, Chastisements, Watching, Fasting, and such like corporal Mortifications.

Many, especially Women, fancy themselves consummately virtuous, when habituated to long vocal Prayers, hearing several Masses, assisting at the whole divine Office, spending many Hours in the Church, and frequent Communion.

B

Others,

Others, not excepting some of those who have consecrated themselves to God in a religious Life, think that Perfection consists in being assiduous in the *Choir*, in affecting Silence and Retirement, and a strict Observance of their Rule. Thus different People place *Perfection* in different Practices ; but certain it is they all equally deceive themselves. For, as exterior Works are no more than either Dispositions for becoming truly *Pious*, or the Effects of real *Piety* ; it cannot be said that christian *Perfection* and true *Piety* consists in them.

Doubtless they are powerful Means for becoming truly Perfect and truly Pious, and, when employed with Discretion, are of singular Efficacy for supporting our Nature, ever averse to Good and prone to Evil ; for repelling the Attacks and escaping the Snares of our common Enemy ; for obtaining from the Father of Mercies, those Succours so necessary for the Righteous, especially Beginners.

They are besides, in Persons truly Pious, excellent Fruits of a consummate Virtue. For such chastise their Bodies either in Punishment of past Offences, or for a greater Humiliation and Subjection to their Creator. They seek Solitude and observe Silence, that, retired from the World, they may preserve themselves clear of the least Stain of Sin, and converse only with Heaven and its Angels. Their Time is spent in Works of Piety and the Service of God ; they pray, and meditate on the Life and Passion of their *Redeemer*, not through Curiosity or for the Sake of some ~~malitiae~~ Pleasure arising from



from thence, but thro' a Desire of knowing better on one Side the Immensity of the divine Goodness, and on the other, the Excess of their own Ingratitude ; in order to augment their Love of God and Detestation of themselves, to follow their Lord in taking up his Cross, and renouncing their own Will ; frequenting the Sacraments with no other view than the Honour of God, and their own stricter Union with him, and greater Security from the Power of the Devil.

But the Case is far different with those who ignorantly place their Devotion in exteriour Works, which frequently are the Cause of their Perdition, and of worse Consequence than manifest Crimes ; not that they are in themselves pernicious, but only from a wrong Application. Their Attachment to such Works is so great, that they utterly neglect to watch the secrect Motions of their Hearts, but, giving them full Scope, leave them exposed to their own Corruption and the Wiles of the Devil. Then it is that this Seducer, seeing them go astray, not only encourages them to pursue their Way, but fills their Imagination with empty Ideas, they already taste the Joys of Paradise, the Delights of Angels ; they see God face to face ! The Deceiver does not hesitate even to suggest in their mental Prayer, sublime, surprising, and ravishing Thoughts, that, forgetting the World and all earthly Things, they are rapt to the third Heaven !

But a very little Reflexion on their Conduct discovers their Error, and the great Distance

between them and that *Perfection*, of which we are now in search. For in every thing, they are fond of Preference before others ; they know no Guide but their own private Judgment, no Rule but their own Will ; and, blind in their own Affairs, ever quick-sighted in those of their Neighbours, ever ready to find fault. Touch but the empty Reputation of Sanctity, they fancy themselves possessed of, and of which they are excessively jealous ; order them but to discontinue any of the Devotions to which they are habituated ; their Trouble and Vexation is scarce to be expres'd.

If God himself, in order to open their Eyes and shew them the true Path to Perfection, should send them Crosses, Sickness, or severe Persecutions, the surest Trials of his Servants Fidelity, and which never happen but by his Appointment and Permission ; then it is that the Corruption of their Hearts discovers itself thro' their excessive Pride.

In all the Accidents of this Life, whether happy or otherwise, they are utter Strangers to a due Conformity to the Will of God ; they know not how to bend under his all-mighty Power, to submit to his Judgments no less equitable than secret and impenetrable, and, in Imitation of *Christ* crucified, to humble themselves before all Men ; to love their Enemies, as the Instruments employed by the divine Goodness to train them to Mortification, and co-operate, not only in their Salvation hereafter, but also in their greater Sanctification in this Life. It is to this that their imminent

Danger

Danger of being lost is owing. For contemplating, with Eyes dazzled by Self-Love, themselves and their Actions, not otherwise blameable, they are puffed up with Vanity, they conclude themselves far advanced towards God, and readily condemn their Neighbour; nay, their *Pride* oftentimes will so far increase their Blindness, that their Conversion cannot be effected without a Miracle of Grace.

And Experience convinces us, that professed Sinners are with less Difficulty reclaim'd, than those who wilfully make their own Hearts a Secret to themselves through a false Resemblance of Virtue. From whence you will easily comprehend, that a *Spiritual Life* does not consist in the several Practices before enumerated, if consider'd only in their outward Appearance: It properly consists in knowing the infinite Greatness and Goodness of God, joined to a true Sense of our own Wretchedness and Propclivity to Evil; in loving God, and hating ourselves; in humbling ourselves not only before him, but, for his Sake, before all Men; in renouncing intirely our own Will in order to follow his; and, to crown the Work, in doing all this for the sole Glory of his Holy Name, with no other View than to please him, on no other Motive than that he ought to be loved and serv'd by all his Creatures.

Such are the Dictates of that Law of Love which the *Holy Ghost* has engraved on the Hearts of the Righteous; thus it is we are to practise that Self-denial so earnestly recommended by our *Saviour* in the *Gospel*; this it is which renders

his Yoke so sweet and his Burthen so light; in fine, herein consists that perfect Obedience our divine Master has so much enforced both by Word and Example. Since therefore you aspire to the highest Degree of *Perfection*, you must wage continual War with yourself, and employ your whole Force in demolishing every vicious Inclination, tho' never so trivial. Consequently, in preparing for the *Combat*, you must summon up all your Resolution and Courage; for no one shall be rewarded with a Crown, who hath not fought courageously.

But remember, that as no War can be carried on with greater Fierceness, the Forces, no other than our own selves, being equal on both Sides: so the *Victory* when gained, is the most pleasing to *God*, and most glorious to the *Conqueror*. For whoever has the Courage to conquer his Passions, to subdue his Appetites, and repulse even the least Motions of his own Will, performs an Action more meritorious in the Sight of *God*, than if, without this, he should tear his Flesh with the sharpest Disciplines, fast with greater Austerity than the ancient Fathers of the Desert, or convert multitudes of Sinners.

It is true, considering Things in themselves, the Conversion of a Soul is doubtless infinitely more acceptable to the *divine Majesty*, than the mortifying a disorderly Affection; yet every one in his own particular ought to begin with what is immedialy required of him. Now what *God* expects at our Hands before all things is a serious Application to the subduing our Passions; and this is more properly doing our Duty, than if, with

with unbridled Appetites, we should do him greater Service.

Thus, being apprised what *Christian Perfection* is, and that, in order to attain it, you must resolve on a perpetual *War* with yourself, begin with providing yourself with four things, as so many Weapons, without which it is impossible to gain the Victory in this *Spiritual Combat*. These four Things are, a *Diffidence of yourself*, a *Confidence in God*, a good use of the *Faculties of Body and Mind*, and the *Duty of Prayer*. Of these, thro' God's Grace, we shall treat clearly and succinctly in the following Chapters.



C H A P. II.

Of Diffidence of Ourselves.

DIFFIDENCE of Ourselves is so absolutely requisite in the *Spiritual Combat*, that without this Virtue we must not expect to defeat the slightest of our Passions, much less to gain a compleat Victory. This important Truth ought to be deeply imprinted in our Breasts; for tho' we are in ourselves a mere Nothing, we are too apt to entertain a *Conceit* of our own Abilities, and falsely conclude that we are Something. This Vice springs from the Corruption of our Nature; but the more natural, the more difficult to be discovered, But God to whom nothing is hid, looks upon it with Horror, because it is his Will that we should be convinced we have neither Virtue nor Grace, but what comes from

him

him alone, and that without him weare incapable of one meritorious Thought.

But notwithstanding this *Difference* of our own Strength be a Gift from Heaven, and bestowed by God on those he loves, sometimes by his holy Inspirations, sometimes by severe Afflictions or Temptations almost insuperable, and other Ways unknown to us, yet he expects we should exert all our Abilities for obtaining it. Which we shall certainly do, if, with the Grace of God, we seriously employ the four following Means.

The *First* is to consider attentively our own *Wretchedness*, and that being in ourselves *Nothing*, we are incapable of doing the least Good, or advancing the least Step towards Heaven without Assistance from above.

The *Second* is, to beg of God, with great Humility and Fervour, this signal Virtue, which must come from him alone. Let us begin with acknowledging not only that we do not possess it, but that of ourselves we are utterly incapable of acquiring it. Then let us cast ourselves at the Feet of our *Lord*, and frequently importune him to grant our Request, and this with a firm Confidence of being heard, provided we wait with Patience the Effect of our Prayer, and persevere in it as long as it shall please the divine Providence.

The *Third* is, to accustom ourselves by degrees to be *dissident* of our own Strength, to dread the Illusions of our own Mind, the strong Propensity of our Nature to Sin, and the terrible Number of *Enemies* which surround us, whose Subtlety, Experience, and Force far surpasses ours ; who

can transform themselves into Angels of Light, and lie continually in wait for us as we advance towards *Heaven*.

The *Fourth* is, that as often as we commit a Fault, we enter into ourselves, in order to discover the Excess of our own Weakness; for God never permits us to fall, but that we may see better into ourselves, that we may learn to despise such vile Creatures as we are, and to desire sincerely to be despised by others; without this we must not hope to obtain a *Diffidence* of ourselves, which is founded on Humility and a Conviction of our own *Wretchedness*.

In effect, whoever proposes to approach the *eternal Truth* and Fountain of all light, must doubtless know himself thoroughly, and not imitate the Pride of those who gain no other Knowledge than what their Sins afford, and only then begin to open their Eyes when they are plunged into some shameful and unforeseen Disorder; which happens through God's Permission, that that they may know their own Weakness, and by a fatal experiment learn to diffide in their own Strength, But God seldom applies so severe a Remedy against their Presumption, but when more favourable Means have failed.

In a Word, he permits Persons to fall more or less in Proportion to their *Pride* and if there were any one as free from this Vice as the *B. Virgin*, I dare pronounce they would never fall. As often therefore as you commit a Fault, have immediate recourse to the Knowledge of yourself; earnestly beseech our Lord to enlighten you, that you may see yourself as your are

in his Sight, and no more presume on your own Strength. Otherwise you will fall again into the same Faults, or perhaps much greater, to the eternal Ruin of your Soul.



C H A P. III.

Of Confidence in God.

ALTHO' a *Dissidence* of ourselves be absolutely necessary in the *Spiritual Combat*, as I have just now shewn ; nevertheless, if this is all we have to trust to; we shall soon be put to flight, plunder'd and subdued by the *Enemy*. To it therefore we must join a firm *Confidence* in God the Author of all Good, and from whom alone the *Victory* must be expected. For if it be certain that of ourselves we are nothing, dangerous and continual Misfortunes will attend us ; and Reason will suggest a *Dissidence* of our own Strength ; but if we are fully convinced of our Weakness, we shall gain, thro' the Assistance of God, very signal Advantages over our *Enemies*, nothing being of greater Efficacy for obtaining the Assistance of *Heaven*, than placing a noble *Confidence* in God. We have four Means of acquiring this excellent Virtue.

The *First* is, to ask it with great *Humility*.

The *Second* is, to contemplate with a lively *Faith*, the immense Power and infinite Wisdom of that *supream Being*, to whom nothing is difficult ; whose *Goodness* knows no Limits, whose

Love

Love for those who serve him, is ever ready to furnish them with whatever is requisite for their *Spiritual Life*, and gaining a compleat *Victory* over themselves.

All that he demands of them is to have recourse to him with an entire *Confidence*. And can any thing be more reasonable? Is it possible that the amiable *Sheperd*, (*Luke xv.*) who for upwards of thirty-three Years sought after the lost Sheep, through rough and thorny Ways, with so much *Pain* that it cost him the last Drop of his *sacred Blood*; is it possible, I say, that so good a *Shepherd*, seeing at last his strayed *Sheep* returning to him, with a Design of being guided for the future by him alone, and with a sincere, tho' yet perhaps but weak, Intention to obey him, he should not look upon it with Pity, listen to its Cries, not bear it upon his Shoulders to the Fold? Doubtless he is greatly pleased to see it united again to the Flock, and invites the Angels to rejoice with him on the Occasion.

For if he searches so diligently after the *Drachma* in the *Gospel*, by which the *Sinner* is figured, if he leaves nothing untouched to find it, can he reject those who, like *Sheep* longing to behold their *Shepherd*, return towards the Fold? Can it be imagined that the *Spouse* of our Souls, who ardently seeks to take possession of our Hearts; whose greatest Delight is to communicate himself to us; and heap continual Blessings on us; what likelihood is there but that finding the Door open; and hearing us beg to be honoured with his Presence, he will vouchsafe to grant our Request?

The third Means of acquiring this salutary
Confidence,

Confidence, is frequently to call to mind what we are assured of in the *Holy Scriptures*, those *Oracles of Truth*, in a thousand different Places, that no one who puts his *Trust in God* shall be confounded.

The fourth Means of acquiring both a *Difidence* of ourselves and a *Confidence* in God is, that when we have any good Action to perform, or some Failing to encounter, before we enter upon it, we cast our Eyes on our own Weaknesses on one Side, and on the other contemplate the infinite *Power*, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* of God, and thus balancing what we *fear* from ourselves, with what we *hope* from God, we courageously undergo the greatest difficulties and severest Trials. With these Arms joined to *Prayer*, as we shall see hereafter, we shall be enabled to execute the greatest Designs, and gain compleat Victories.

But if we neglect this Method, though we may flatter ourselves we are actuated by a Principle of *Confidence* in God, we shall generally be deceived; because *Presumption* is so very natural to Man, that it even insinuates itself imperceptibly into the *Confidence* he imagines he has in God, and the *Difidence* he fancies he has of himself. Consequently in order to banish entirely all *Presumption*, and to sanctify every Action with the two Virtues opposite to this Vice, the Consideration of his own *Weakness* must necessarily precede that of the *Divine Power*, and both of them be previous to all his Undertakings.



C H A P. IV.

*How to discover whether we truly diffide in Ourselves
and place our Confidence in God.*

THE presumptuous Man is persuaded he has acquired a *Diffidence* of himself and a *Confidence* in God ; but this Mistake is never more plainly discovered then when some Fault is committed. For if he gives way to *Vexation* and *Despair* of advancing in the *Way of Virtue*, it is evident he placed his *Confidence* in *himself*, and not in *God*. And the greater the *Anxiety* and *Despondence*, the greater Certainty of his Guilt.

For if he who much diffides in himself and places great *Confidence* in *God*, if he should commit a Fault, he is not at all surpris'd, he does not abandon himself to a perplexing *Vexation* ; he justly attributes what has happen'd to his own *Weakness* and a Want of due *Confidence* in *God*. Hence he learns to diffide still more in himself, and place all his Hopes in the Assistance of the *All-mighty*, He detests beyond all things the Sin he has fallen into ; he condemns that Passion or criminal Habit which occasioned his Fall ; he conceives a lively Sorrow for having offended his *God* ; but his Sorrow, ever attended with Peace of Mind, does not interrupt the Method he has laid down, or prevent his pursuing his Enemies to their final Destruction.

I sincerely wish, that what has been here ad-

vanced were attentively consider'd by many who think themselves very devout, yet from the Moment they commit a Fault will not be pacified, but hurry away to their *Director*, more to rid themselves of the *Vexation* arising from *Self-Love*, than out of any other Motive; tho' their principal Care should be to wash away the Guilt of Sin in the *Sacrament of Penance*, and fortify themselves with that of the *Eucharist* against a Relapse.



C H A . P . V .

Of the Mistake of many, who esteem Pugillanimity a Virtue.

TH E R E is another *Illusion* too common in Devotion, which gives the Name of *Virtue* to that *Fear* and *Anxiety* arising from *Sin*. For though this *Vexation* be accompanied with some *Sorrow*, yet it is founded on *Pride*, and a secret *Presumption* a Person entertains of his own *Strength*. Thus he, who fancying himself far advanced in *Virtue*, looks with too much Indifference on *Temptations*, yet finds by woeful Experience, that, like other Men, he is subject to *Weakness*; he is astonished at his Fall, and finding himself deceived in his Expectations, gives a Loose to *Anguish* and *Despair*.

This never befalls the *humble Soul*, who presumes not on her own *Strength*, but places all her *Trust* in *God alone*. For if she commits a Fault, it occasions no Surprise nor *Vexation*, because

because she discovers by that Light of Truth which is her Guide, that her Fall is owing to her natural *Unsteadiness* and *Frailty*.



C H A P. VI.

Farther Advice, of great Efficacy for obtaining a Diffidence of Ourselves, and a Confidence in God.

AS all our Force for conquering the Enemy springs from a *Diffidence of Ourselves* and a *Confidence in God*, I think it incumbent upon me to give some farther Advice, very necessary for obtaining these Virtues.

In the first Place, let every one be fully persuaded, that neither all possible *Qualifications*, whether natural or acquired, nor all *supernatural Gifts* or perfect Knowledge of the *Scriptures*, not even whole Ages spent in the Service of his *Creator*, can enable him to do the Will of God and comply with his Duty, unless the Hand of the *All-mighty* support him as often as any good Action is to be done, any Temptation overcome, any Danger to be avoided, or *Cross* to be taken up, which *Providence* shall please to ordain, Let him therefore place this *Truth* before his Eyes every Day, Hour, and Moment of his Life ; that he may be ever mindful of it, and thus banish all Presumption, never rashly daring to confide in himself.

But in order to acquire an intire *Confidence*

in God, we must firmly believe that he is equally able to subdue all *Enemies*, whether many or few, strong or weak, experienced or unexperienced. Consequently, though a Soul should be overwhelm'd by Sins, though she were subject to all the Defects imaginable; tho' she had laboured in vain to disengage herself from *Vice*, and follow *Virtue*; tho' she should even find her Propensity to *Evil* encrease daily, instead of advancing in *Virtue*; yet she must not fail to place her *Confidence* in God, she must not be discouraged, or abandon her *Spiritual Works*: on the contrary, she ought to excite herself to new Fervour, and redouble her Efforts against the *Enemy*,

For in this Sort of *Combat* the Victory is sure to attend him who has the Courage not to throw down his *Arms*, or lay aside his *Confidence* in God, whose Assistance is never wanting to such as fight his *Battles*, tho' he may sometimes permit them to be wounded. Persevere therefore to the End, and on this the *Victory* depends. As to the rest, he who fights for God's Cause, who places his entire Trust in him, finds a speedy and efficacious Remedy for the *Wounds* he receives; and, when he least expects it, sees his *Enemy* at his Feet.



C H A P. VII.

Of the right Use of our Faculties; and first, that the Understanding be free from Ignorance and Curiosity.

IF we engage in the *Spiritual Combat* with no other Weapons than a *Diffidence* of ourselves and

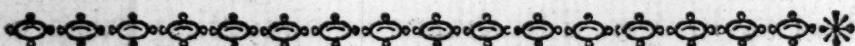
and a *Confidence in God*, we shall not only be disappointed of the Victory over our Passions, but must expect to commit great Oversight very frequently. It is therefore necessary to employ likewise a right Use of the *Faculties* both of Body and Soul; the *third Means* we proposed as requisite for attaining to *Perfection*,

Let us begin with regulating the *Understanding* and the *Will*. The *Understanding* must be exempt from two great Defects, under which it frequently labours. The one is *Ignorance*, which prevents its attaining *Truth*, the proper Object of its Enquiries. By frequent Use the Darknes surrounding it must be dispelled, that it may clearly discern how to cleanse the Soul of all irregular *Affections*, and adorn her with the necessary *Virtues*. The means of executing this are as follows.

The *First* and Principal is *Prayer*, by which is asked the *Light* of the *Holy Ghost*, who never rejects such as seek God in earnest, who delight in fulfilling his Law, and in all Occurrences submit their own Judgment to that of their *Superiors*.

The *Second* is, a continual Application to examine seriously and diligently every Object, in order to distinguish *Good* from *Evil*, and form a Judgment not from outward Appearances, the Testimony of our Senses, or the Notions of a corrupt World, but suitable to the Idea the *Holy Ghost* annexes to it. Thus we shall clearly discern, that what the World pursues with such Eagerness and Affection is mere *Vanity*, and *Illusion*; that *Ambition* and *Pleasure* are Dreams, which, when passed, are succeeded by *Vexation*

and *Regret*; that *Ignominy* is a Subject of *Glory*, and *Sufferings* the Source of *Joy*; that nothing can be more noble, nor approach nearer to the divine *Nature*, than to pardon those who injure, and return *Good* for *Evil*; that it is greater to despise the *World*, than to have it at command; that it is infinitely preferable to submit to the meanest of Mankind for *God's Sake*, than to give Law to *Kings* and *Princes*; that an humble Knowledge of ourselves surpasses the sublimest *Sciences*; in fine, that greater Praise is due to him who curbs his Passions on the most trivial Occasions, than to him who takes the strongest Cities, defeats whole Armies, or even works Miracles and raises the Dead to Life.



C H A P. VIII.

Of the Obstacle which prevents our forming a right Judgment of Things: How we may be Assisted in it.

THE Difficulty of forming a right Judgment of such Things as we have just now mentioned, and many others, arises from a hasty Motion of *Love* or *Hatred* we are apt to conceive of them at their first Appearance; and our Reason being prejudiced by such blind Passions, every thing appears in a far different Light from that in which it ought to be consider'd. Whoever therefore desires to secure himself from so dangerous and common an *Illusion*, must carefully preserve his Heart free from all inordinate *Affections*.

When

When any Object presents itself, let the *Understanding* with mature Deliberation weigh its Merits before the *Will* be suffered to embrace it, if agreeable ; or reject it, if otherwise.

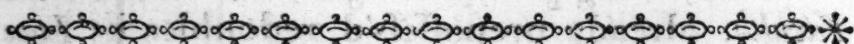
For whilst the *Understanding* remains unbiassed by the *Passions*, it will easily distinguish between *Truth* and *Falsehood*, between real *Evil* under the Appearance of *Good*, and real *Good* under the false Appearance of *Evil*. Whereas no sooner is the *Will* moved by the Object either to *Love* or *Hatred* but the *Understanding* becomes incapable of forming a just Notion of it; because the *Affection*, by disguising it, imprints a false *Idea*, and then, being presented again to the *Will*, the *Faculty*, already prepossess'd, redoubles its *Love* or *Hatred*, exceeds all Bounds, and is utterly deaf to the Voice of *Reason*.

In such a monstrous Confusion, the *Understanding* plunges deeper and deeper into Error, and represents the Object to the *Will* with heighten'd Colours of *Good* or *Evil*.

Thus, whenever the Rule I before laid down, and which on this occasion is of the greatest Importance, happens to be neglected, the two most noble Faculties of the *Soul* are bewilder'd in a Maze of *Error*, *Darkness* and *Confusion*. Happy are those, who, void of all Attachment to Creatures, endeavour to discern the true Nature of Things before they suffer their *Affections* to be engaged ; who frame their Judgment by the Dictates of *Reason*, but especially by those supernatural Lights the *Holy Ghost* is pleased to communicate either immediately from *himself*, or by those he has appointed for our *Guides*.

But

But remember, that this Advice ought often-times more exactly to be followed in those Things which of themselves are commendable, than in those which are not intirely so, because of the greater Danger of being deceived, and the *Prejudice* and *Eagerness* they generally occasion. Let nothing therefore be done rashly, since a single Circumstance of *Time* or *Place* not observed may spoil all, and great Faults be committed in the very Manner and Order of the Performance; as in the Case of many, who have wrought their own Perdition in the Practice of the most sanctified *Exercises*.



C H A P. IX.

Another Means for preventing the Understanding being deceived in its Choice.

A Nother Vice, from which the *Understanding* ought to be entirely free, is *Curiosity*. For if we indulge ourselves in vain, frivolous, or sinful Speculations, our *Minds* will become incapable of chusing what is most proper for mortifying our disorderly *Affections*, or attaining solid *Perfection*. Let us therefore be dead to all worldly Things and utterly neglect them, unless absolutely necessary, even though not criminal in themselves; let us rein in our *Minds*, and not suffer them to range at large on Variety of Objects; let us render them insensible to all profane Speculations; let us not listen after Rumours; let us shun

shun all such as are ever gaping after *News*; let us look upon the various *Revolutions* of this *lower Orb*, with the same Indifference as if they were only Dreams. Even with respect to heavenly Things let *Discretion* be our Guide; let us not soar too high, let our greatest *Ambition* be to have continually before our Eyes *Christ crucified*, to know the Particulars of his *Life* and *Death*, and what he requires of us. Beyond this let us not seek any thing, and we shall please that divine *Master*, whose true *Disciples* ask nothing of him, but what may contribute to their doing his holy *Will*. Whatever Desire or Search exceeds this, it is no other than *Self-Conceit*, a spiritual *Pride*, and a Snare of the *Devil*.

Such as regulate their Conduct in this Manner, will be proof against the Attacks of the old *Serpent*, who seeing in the Fervour of Persons entering upon Spiritual Exercises, a *Will* fixed and resolute, tries his Subtleties on their *Understanding* that through it he may work his Way to their *Will*, and thus master both those *Faculties*.

In order to succeed, he swells their *Imagination* in time of Prayer, suggesting elevated Sentiments; especially to such as are naturally curious, penetrating, and subject to *Self-Conceit* and a Fondness of their own *Notions*.

His Aim is to amuse them with vain *Speculations*, and the sensible Pleasure arising from them, that, lull'd with a false Notion of enjoying *God*, they may forget to cleanse their Hearts, to study themselves, and practise *Mortification*; thus elated with *Pride*, they idolize their *Understanding*, and accustom'd to consult

no body but themselves, they are at last per-
suaded that they have no farther Occasion for
the Assistance and Advice of others.

This is a pernicious and almost an incurable
Evil; as it is much more difficult to remedy the
Pride of the *Understanding* than that of the *Heart*.
For the *Pride* of the *Heart* is no sooner discover'd
by the *Understanding*, but it may be removed by
a voluntary Submission to the Orders of proper
Superiors. Whereas, if a Person takes it into
his Head, and obstinately persists in maintain-
ing, that he is wiser than those who are placed
over him, how is he to be undeceived? Which
way will he discover his Error? To whose Judg-
ment will he submit, so long as he fancies him-
self wiser than all the World? If the *Understand-
ing*, that Eye of the Soul, and which alone can
discover and rectify the Vanity of the *Heart*, be
itself blind and swelled with *Pride*, who shall
undertake to cure its Maladies? If the Light
changes to Darkness, if the Rule is erroneous,
what must become of the rest?

Let us therefore guard against so pernicious
an *Evil*, and never suffer it to take possession of
our *Minds*; let us accustom ourselves to ac-
quiesce in the Judgment of others, without
carrying our Notions of *Spirituality* too high;
let us grow enamour'd with that *Folly* and *Sim-
plicity* so much recommended by the *Apofle*
(*1 Cor. iii. 18.*) and we shall surpass *Solomon*
himself in *Wisdom*.

C H A P. X.

Of the Exercise of the Will, and of the End to which all our Actions, interiour and exteriour, ought to be directed.

Having rectified the Faults of the *Understanding*, we must proceed to those of the *Will*, that, being divested of its Inclinations, it may become entirely devoted to the *Will of God*.

It must be observed, that it is not sufficient to *desire*, nor even to *execute* what is most pleasing to *God*, but it is also requisite to *desire* and to *perform* it from a Motion of his *Grace*, and out of a *Willingness* to please him. Here will arise the greatest Struggle with our *Nature*, ever so greedy of being pleased, that even in *spiritual* Things above others, it seeks its own Satisfaction, resting there with the less Scruple, as no *Evil* appears. Hence it comes, that when we enter upon Works of *Piety*, our Impulse proceeds not from the sole View of doing the *Will of God*, but from a sensible Pleasure, which often accompanies such *Exercises*.

And the *Illusion* is still the more subtle, as the Object of our Affections is the more commendable in itself, Who would imagine that *Self-Love*, criminal as it is, should prompt us to unite ourselves to *God*? And that in desiring to possess *him*, we should have more regard to our own *Interest*, than to his *Glory* and the *Accomplishment* of his

his *Holy Will*? Which, nevertheless, ought to be the sole Intention of those who love him, seek him, and make profession of keeping his *Law*. In order to avoid so dangerous a *Rock*, and to habituate ourselves not to desire, or put in practice any thing but by the Impulse of the *Holy Ghost*, and with a pure Intention of honouring him, who will be not only the first *Principle*, but also the last *End* of all our Actions, the following Method must be observed.

When an Opportunity offers of performing some pious Work, let us be watchful lest our *Hearts* fix upon it, before we raise our Minds to God, that we may know whether it be according to his *Will*, and whether we desire it purely because it is pleasing to him. Our *Will* being thus prevented and directed by the *Will of God*, tends to no other Motive than that of conforming entirely to him and advancing his *Glory*. The same Method ought to be observed in rejecting what is contrary to his *Will*; the first Motion ought to be to raise our Minds to God, to know that it is displeasing to him, and to be satisfied, that in rejecting it, we shall act in conformity to his *Holy Will*.

But we must remember, it is with great Difficulty that we discover the Artifices of our corrupt *Nature*, which, ever fond of centring under specious *Pretexts* all things in itself, flatters us with a Persuasion, that in all our Actions we have no other View than to please God. Hence it comes, that in what we embrace or reject, only in Reality to humour ourselves, we erroneously imagine that we act on a Principle of pleasing,

ing, or a Dread of displeasing our Sovereign Lord. The most efficacious Remedy against this Evil, is a *Purity of Heart*, which every one who engages in the *Spiritual Combat* must purpose to obtain, by putting off the *Old Man*, and cloathing themselves with the *New*.

The Application of this divine Remedy consists in carefully divesting ourselves of all human Motives in every thing we undertake; *pursuing* or *rejecting* nothing but in conformity to the *Will of God*. Perhaps in every thing we do, and particularly in the silent Motions of the *Heart*, or those exterior Actions which are quickly over, we may not always perceive the Influence of this Motive, at least let us be so disposed, that *virtually*, and as it were through Habit, we do nothing but with a View of pleasing God alone. But in Actions which last any Time, this *virtual Intention* will not suffice; it ought to be frequently renewed, and cultivated in its greatest Purity and Fervour: For otherwise we shall run great Hazard of being deluded by Self-Love, which always preferring the *Creature* before the *Creator*, bewitches in such a Manner, that in a short Time we are imperceptibly drawn from the Intention we first form'd.

Well-meaning Persons, but who are not sufficiently on their Guard, generally set out with no other View than of pleasing *God*: yet by Degrees they suffer themselves, without perceiving it, to be drawn away by *Vain-Glory*: So that forgetting the *Divine Will* which first influenced them, they are entirely attached to the *Satisfaction* arising from what they do, and

the Advantage and Credit they may expect from it.

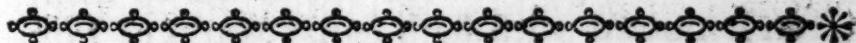
And if it happens that when they think they are doing Wonders, *Providence* permits them to be interrupted either by Sicknes or any other Accident, they are presently dissatisfied, murmuring against every one about them, and sometimes against *God* himself. This plainly shews, that the Motive and Spring of their Actions was bad. For whoever acts from the Influence of *Divine Grace*, and with the sole View of pleasing *God*, is indifferent as to what he is employed in ; or if he is bent upon any thing in particular, the Manner and Time of doing it is entirely submitted to *Providence*, being perfectly resign'd, whatever Success attends his Undertakings, having nothing at Heart but the Accomplishment of the *Divine Will*.

Let every one therefore recollect himself, and direct all his Actions to so excellent and so noble an *End*. And if he finds himself dispos'd to perform any Work of Piety, in order to avoid the *Punishment* or deserve the *Rewards* of the *next Life*; let him propose, as the *End* of his Undertaking, the *Will of God*, who requires of us to avoid *Hell* and gain *Heaven*. It is not to be imagined what Efficacy this Motive has, since the least Action though never so inconsiderable, perform'd for his Holy Sake, far surpasses many others, tho' of much greater Moment, when executed with another View. Upon this Principle, a small *Alms* given solely in Honour of *God*, is infinitely more agreeable to *him*, than if upon any other Motive, large Possessions were abandoned

abandoned, even with a View of gaining the Kingdom of *Heaven*. Not but that such a Motive is highly commendable in itself, and worthy of our Regard.

This holy Practice of performing our Actions with the sole Intention of pleasing *God*, may carry some Difficulty with it at first; but Time will render it familiar and even delightful, if we use ourselves to seek *God* in the Sincerity of our *Hearts*; if we sigh continually after him as the only and sovereign *Good*, deserving to be sought, valued, and loved by all Creatures beyond any thing else. The more attentively we contemplate the Greatness and Goodness of *God*, the more frequently and tenderly will our Affections tend to that *Divine Object*; and thus we shall sooner and with less Difficulty attain a *Habit* of directing all our Actions to his Glory.

Finally, we may assign as a Means of always acting on so excellent and elevated a Motive, the fervent begging of our *Lord* this Grace, and the frequent Consideration of the infinite Benefits he has already bestowed upon us, and every Moment continues to repeat thro' an undeserved and disinterested Affection.



C H A P. XI.

Some Considerations which may incline the Will to desire nothing but in Conformity with God.

IN order to induce our *Will* to act with an exact Compliance to the *Will* of *God*, and

promote his Glory ; let us remember that he has set the Example of loving and honouring us a thousand different Ways. He drew us out of Nothing, created us after his own Likeness, and all other Things for our Use : In redeeming us, he would not employ the brightest Angel, but his only Son, who paid the Price of the World, *not with Silver or Gold, which are perishable Things, but with his sacred Blood,* and that by a Death not less ignominious than cruel : He watches continually over us for our Security against the Fury of our Enemies, fights for us by his Holy Grace, and in order both to nourish and strengthen us, is ever ready to feed us with the precious Body of his Son in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Are not these convincing Proofs of the excessive Love which God bears to us ? Who can comprehend the Immensity of his *Charity* for such vile Wretches, or what ought to be our *Gratitude* towards so gracious a *Benefactor* ? And if the great Ones of this World think themselves obliged to make some Return for the Respect paid them, even by those whom Birth or Fortune has made their Inferiours ; what Return ought not the Worms of the Earth to make, *when honour'd with such signal Marks of Love and Esteem by the sovereign Lord of the Universe?* Let us not forget in particular, that this infinite *Majesty* is worthy to be served by us through a Principle of singular Love, which has no other View than his sole *Will and Pleasure.*



C H A P. XII.

Of the different Wills in Men, which continually oppose each other.

TH E R E are two *Wills* in Man, the one *Superior*, the other *Inferior*. The first is usually called *Reason*; the second we name *Appetite*, *Sensuality*, *Passion*. Nevertheless as Man, properly speaking, is only such by his *Reason*, he is not said to *will* any thing by the first Motion of the *Appetite*, unless the *Superior* Will confirms the Choice.

Thus our whole *spiritual Warfare* consists in this, that the *rational Will* being placed as it were between the *Divine Will* above it, and the *sensual Will* below it, is assaulted on both Sides; *God* moving it by his *Grace*, and the *Flesh* by its *Solicitations*, both contending for the Victory. Hence arise inconceivable Difficulties, when Persons, who during their Youth have contracted vicious Habits, come to a Resolution of changing their Life, mortifying their Passions, and breaking with the *World* in order to devote themselves to the Service of *God*. For their *Will* is violently assaulted by the *Divine Will* and its own *sensual Appetites*, and which way soever it turns, it is with great Difficulty that it withstands such fierce Attacks.

This Onset is not experienced by those, who having been long habituated to *Virtue* or *Vice*,

are fixed in their Manner of Living: The *Virtuous* conforming themselves to the *Will of God*, the *Vicious* gratifying their *sensual Appetites*. But let no one flatter himself that he shall be able to acquire *Virtue* and serve *God* in a due Manner, unless he is resolved to use Violence with himself, and surmount the Difficulty he will experience in quitting the Pleasures, great or little, to which he has had any criminal Attachment.

Hence it is that so few attain any great Degree of *Perfection*. For after conquering the *worst Vices*, and undergoing great Labours, they lose Courage, and fail to pursue their Victory, though only small Trials are to follow, for subduing the feeble Remains of their own *Will*, and for extinguishing several lesser Passions, which gathering Strength again, at last take full Possession of their Hearts.

Of these many, for example, do not take what belongs to *others*, but are passionately attached to what is their *own*. They do not employ unwarrantable Methods of aggrandizing themselves; yet far from contemning *Advancement*, they are fond of it, and pursue it by such Means as they think lawful. They observe appointed *Fasts*, but indulge themselves on other Days in the most delicious *Viands*. They are careful not to transgress in point of *Chastity*, but will not be debarred their favourite *Amusements*, tho' great Obstacles to a *Spiritual Life* and a strict Union with *God*.

Since therefore all these Things are highly dangerous, particularly for those who are not aware

aware of their bad Consequences, every one ought to avoid them with the greatest Caution. Without this, we may be assur'd that most of our *good Works* will be attended with *Slothfulness, Self-love, human Respects, hidden Imperfections, Self-conceit*, a desire of being remarked and applauded by others. Those who are negligent in this Particular, not only make no Progress in the Way of *Salvation*, but even lose Ground, and are in danger of falling back to their former vicious Courses, because they do not aim at solid *Virtue*; because they are insensible of the great Favour *God* has done them in their Deliverance from the Tyranny of the *Devil*; because they are ignorant of the Danger which surrounds them, and are bewitched by a false and deceitful *Peace*.

We must nothere omit to point out an *Illusion*, the more to be dreaded as it is not easily discovered. Many who enter upon a *Spiritual Life*, loving themselves too well, if such may be said to love themselves, single out those *Exercises* as are most pleasing, but shun whatever is disagreeable to their *Humour*, or proper for mortifying their *Passions*, against which their whole Force ought to be turned in the *Spiritual Combat*. Too much Pains cannot be taken to make them relish the Difficulty they find in conquering their *Inclinations*, for on this All depends; and the greater Resolution they manifest in getting over the first Obstacles which occur, the speedier and more signal *Victory* attends them. Let them therefore courageously expect nothing but Difficulty in this *Warfare*, and wait with Patience for

for the *Victory*, and its Fruits, and then they may depend upon not being disappointed.



C H A P. XIII.

In what manner we are to encounter Sensuality: and what Acts ought to proceed from the Will, in order to acquire virtuous Habits.

WHENEVER we find the Possession of our Hearts, contended for by our *Creator* on one Side, and *Sensuality* on the other, if we observe the following Methods, Victory will attend the Cause of Heaven,

1. The first Motions of the *sensual* Appetite in opposition to *Reason*, must be carefully suppress'd, lest the *Will* should give its Consent.

2. This being done, they may be suffer'd to return, in order to give them a greater Overthrow.

3. They may even be allow'd a third Trial, in order to accustom ourselves to repulse them with a generous Disdain. But it must be observed, these Methods of stirring up Passions, are not to take place when *Chastity* is concerned, of which we shall speak hereafter.

4. In fine, it is of great Importance to form Acts of those *Virtues* which are contrary to the vicious *Inclinations* we encounter. The following Example will place this in a clear Light.

Perhaps you are subject to *Impatience*. Recollect your self, and observe what passes in

your

your Mind. You will plainly see that the *Vexation*, which first arose in the *inferior* Appetite, endeavours to gain the *Will* and the *superior* Appetite. Then, as I set down in the first Place, be sure to put a Stop to its Career, and prevent it from prevailing on the *Will*. Quit not the Field till your Enemy be intirely subdued, and reduced to a due Subjection to *Reason*.

But see the Subtlety of the wicked *Fiend* ! When he finds you courageously resist any impetuous *Passion*, he not only desists from kindling in your *Heart*, but even will assist in quenching the Fire for the present. His Design is to prevent your attaining the contrary *Virtue* by a steady Resistance, and to swell you with the Vanity of thinking yourself a great *Warriour* for dispatching your Enemy in so short a Time. It is necessary therefore to renew the Charge, calling to mind what first moved you to *Impatience* and *Disquiet*, and when you perceive the same *Emotion* to arise in the *inferior* Appetite, excite the whole Force of your *Will* to suppress it.

But as it frequently happens, that after the most strenuous Endeavours against the Enemy, and this on a Principle of doing our Duty and pleasing God; as, I say, after all this, we are not entirely out of danger of being defeated in a third Attack, we must once more encounter the *Passion* we contend with, and conceive not only a *Hatred*, but even a *Disdain* and *Horror* of it.

In fine, if you seek to adorn your Soul with *Virtue*, and acquire habitual *Sanctity*, it will be requisite to form frequent Acts of the contrary *Virtues* to your vicious *Inclinations*. For example, if you would acquire a consummate *Meekness*, you must not think it sufficient to employ the three Sorts of Weapons abovemention'd, for overcoming all *Impatience* occasion'd by the *Contempt* you undergo from others; you must proceed even to an Affection for that very *Contempt*; to wish for its being repeated, and that too by the same Persons; to resolve to suffer patiently still greater Insults.

The Reason why we are under a Necessity of forming *Acts* directly contrary to the *Failings* we encounter, if we would attain *Perfection*, is this; other *Acts* of *Virtue*, however efficacious and frequent, do not strike directly at the Root of the *Evil*. Thus, to continue the same Example, though you give no Consent to the Motions of *Anger*, but encounter them in the several Methods we have prescribed; yet be assur'd, that unless you accustom yourself to relish *Contempt* and rejoice in it, you will never entirely root out the particular Vice of *Impatience*, which springs from a Dread of being despised, and a Fondness for the Applause of Men. For as long as the Root of that *Weed* is not torn away, so long will it sprout afresh, and your *Virtue* fade away; nay, in time you may find yourself stript of all virtuous *Habits*, and in continual Hazard of falling back into your past Disorders.

Never hope therefore to acquire solid *Virtues*, unless, by forming frequent *Acts* directly opposite

sit, you destroy the Failings to which you are subject. I say, by frequent *Acts*; for, as many Sins are requisite for contracting a vicious Habit, in the same manner frequent *Acts* are necessary for attaining a *virtuous* Habit. And even a greater Number of *Acts* must be employed in the latter Case, than in the former, because our corrupt *Nature* opposes itself on the one Side, as much as it assists on the other.

Observe moreover, that where the *Virtue* sought for, is not be acquired without forming *exteriour* *Acts* corresponding to the *interior* ones, as it happens in regard of *Patience*, you must not only speak with much *Charity* and *Mildness* to those who have injured you, however great the Offence may be, but even assist them to the utmost of your Abilities. And notwithstanding such *Acts*, whether interior or exterior, may seem of little Moment, and be attended with great Repugnance, be sure not to omit them, for however faint they may appear, they will certainly support you in the Combat, and greatly contribute to your gaining the Victory.

Watch therefore over your Mind, and don't content yourself with only restraining the most *violent* Sallies of your *Passions*; resist the most *minute*, as they generally dispose to greater, and pave the Way to *confirm'd* vicious *Habits*. Does not Experience teach us, that many, who are negligent in mortifying their Passions on trivial Occasions, tho' in things of greater Moment they have shown their Courage; does not Experience, I say, teach us, that

that they are unexpectedly beset, and furiously attack'd, by *Enemies* who had never been entirely defeated?

- There is still one Thing more I must here recommend with great Earnestness which is, to mortify your *Inclinations* even when the *Object* is in itself *lawful*, but not *necessary*. The Advantage arising from hence will be very considerable; the *Victory* on other Occasions will be much facilitated; you will gain Experience and Strength against Temptations, and render yourself very acceptable to your *Saviour*. I deal sincerely with you: do not fail to exert yourself in the holy *Practices* I have mentioned, and which are absolutely requisite for a perfect Reformation of your *Interior*. You will speedily gain a most glorious Victory over yourself. You will advance with great Rapidity in the Way of *Virtue*, and your Life become, not in appearance only, but truly *Spiritual*.

Whereas if you pursue other Methods, however excellent you may fancy them, though you taste the greatest spiritual Delights, tho' you may imagine yourself intimately united to God; yet depend upon it, you will never acquire solid *Virtue*, nor know what true *Spirituality* is, which, as we have shewn in the first Chapter, does not consist in *Exercises* agreeable and soothing to *Nature*, but in such as crucify it and all its irregular *Affections*.

Thus it is that Man, renew'd by the *Virtues* he has acquired, unites himself strictly to his

Creator

Creator and crucified Saviour. Likewise it is certain, that as vicious *Habits* are contracted by several Acts of the *Will*, yielding to sensual Appetites; in the same Manner, *evangelical Perfection* is attained by repeated Acts of the *Will* conforming itself to the *Will of God*, who moves it to the Practice of different Virtues at different Times. And as the *Will* incurs no Guilt, altho' the whole Force of the *inferior* Appetite be exerted for that Effect, without its own Consent; so on the other side it cannot be sanctified and united to *God*, whatever Strength of *Grace* be employed to attract it, unless it co-operates with that *Grace* by Acts not only *interior*, but even *exterior*, if requisite;



C H A P. XIV.

How we are to behave when the Will seems to be overpowered and unable to resist the sensual Appetite.

IF at any Time you are apprehensive lest the *Will* should give way to the *inferior* Appetite and other Enemies which strive to master it, and if you perceive your Courage and Resolution begin to fail, nevertheless maintain your Ground; don't quit the Field, for you ought to look upon the *Victory* as your own, so long as you are not entirely overcome. And indeed, as your *Will* does not stand in need of the *inferior* Appetite's Consent for making its

Choice; in the same Manner, whatever Violence this domestick Enemy may use, still the Liberty of the *Will* remains inviolable. For it has received from the *All-mighty* so absolute a Dominion, that all the *Senses*, the wicked *Spirits* and the whole *Creation* leagued together, cannot prejudice the *Liberty* it enjoys of acting or not acting as often, in what Manner and for what End it pleases.

But if sometimes Temptations press so hard upon you, that your *Will*, almost overpowered, seems to want sufficient Strength to resist any longer, be sure not to be disheartened or throw down your Arms. Cry out and defend yourself, saying to the *Tempter*, Begone, infernal Fiend! I'll die a thousand Deaths before I'll yield to thy vile Suggestions. Behave like one who is engaged with an obstinate Adversary, and not being able to pierce him with the Point, attacks with the Hilt of his Sword; see how he strives to disengage himself, how he retires only to return with greater Vigour and dispatch his *Enemy* with one fatal Blow. This will teach you to retire frequently into yourself, and recollect that of yourself you are nothing, and unable to do any Thing, and from thence place a generous *Confidence* in the all-mighty Power of *God*; that you may be enabled by his *Holy Grace* to attack and finally vanquish the Passion which molests you.

It is here you must cry out, help me, *O Lord!* My *God* assist me! *Jesu!* *Mary!* abandon not your Servant: Let me not fall a Prey to this Temptation.

As often as the Enemy gives you so much Respite, call in your *Understanding* to the Assistance of your *Will*; strengthen it with the several *Reflections* proper to raise its Courage and animate it to renew the *Fight*. Thus, for Example, if you are persecuted unjustly, or otherwise afflicted, and in the Excess of Uneasiness tempted to fall into *Vexation*, so as to lose all Patience, endeavour to recover yourself by a serious *Reflection* on these or the like Points.

1. Examine whether you do not deserve the *Uneasiness* you suffer, and have not drawn it upon yourself. For if you are any ways to blame, it is but fit that you bear patiently the Anguish of a *Wound* you yourself have occasioned.

2. But if you have nothing to reproach yourself with on this Head, look back on past Disorders, for which the *Divine Justice* has not yet inflicted Punishment, nor you sufficiently expiated by a voluntary Penance. And seeing that *God* through his infinite *Mercy*, instead of a long Punishment in the Flames of *Purgatory*, or an *eternal* one in those of *Hell*, has appointed an easy and momentary one in this Life, accept of it not only with *Resignation*, but with *Joy* and *Thanksgiving*.

3. If you imagine without just Grounds, that your *Faults* are few, and your *penitential Works* very *considerable*, remember the Way to the Kingdom of *Heaven* is narrow and full of Tribulation.

4. Consider moreover, that if you could discover another Road, the Dictates of ardent Love should deter you from so much as thinking of it; since the Son of God, and all the Saints after him, arrived there by no other than the thorny Path of the Cross.

5. But what you ought chiefly to have in View on this and all other Occasions, is the Will of God, who loves you so tenderly, as to be delighted with every heroick Act of Virtue you perform, and the Return you make by your Fidelity and Courage to his immense Love. Remember, likewise, that the more unjustly you suffer, and consequently the more grievous your Affliction, the greater your Merit is in the Sight of God: for that in the midst of your Sufferings you adore his Judgments, and submit with Resignation to his divine Providence, which draws Good from the greatest Evils, and makes the very Malice of our Enemies subservient to our eternal Happiness.



C H A P. XV.

Farther Advice how to acquit ourselves well in the Fight: What Enemies we ought to engage, and what Courage is required for subduing them.

YOU have already seen how you must behave, in order to gain the Victory over yourself, and attain the necessary Virtues. But to do this with the greater Facility and Expedition,

dition, we must not content ourselves with once signalizing our Courage; it is requisite to return so often to the *Combat*, especially when engaged with *Self-Love*, that we may at last esteem all those our *Friends* from whom we receive the most cruel and most mortifying *Injuries*. It frequently happens, as I observed before, that where this Kind of *Combat* is declined, the Victories are attended with great Difficulty, are very imperfect, less frequent, and soon lost again. Fight, therefore, with great Resolution, let not the Weakness of your *Nature* be an Excuse. If your Strength fail you, beg more from *God*, who will not refuse what you ask.

Consider, that if the *Fury* of your Enemies be great, and their Number immense, still the *Love* which *God* bears you, is infinitely greater: The *Angels* who protect you, and the *Saints* who intercede in your Behalf, are still more numerous.

Even *Women*, by these Reflections, have acquired sufficient Courage, have baffled the Wisdom of the *World*, trampled on the Allurements of the *Flesh*, and triumphed over the Malice of the *Devil*. Be not, therefore, disheartened, tho' you may think it a difficult Task to withstand the Efforts of so many Enemies; that this *Warfare* will not end but with your Life, and that unavoidable Ruin threatens you on all Sides. For know, that neither the *Force* nor *Artifice* of your Enemies can hurt you without the Permission of *Him* for whose Honour you engage. And as he delights in

this Kind of *Combat*, and, as much as in him lies, exhort every one to engage in it, he is so far from suffering those, who are bent upon your Ruin, to compass their wicked Designs, that he will fight on your Side, and sooner or later crown your Endeavours with Victory, tho' the *Combat* should only end with your Life.

All he demands of you is, that you defend yourself courageously, and that, notwithstanding any *Wounds* you may possibly receive, you never lay down your *Arms*, nor quit the *Field*. In fine, that you may not be wanting to your Duty, remember this *War* is unavoidable, and we must either fight or die; as the *Fury* and *Obstinacy* of your Enemies is such, that all *Peace*, or *Truce* with them is utterly impossible.



C H A P. XVI.

That the Soldier of Christ must prepare early for the Fight.

TH E first Thing you are to do when you wake, is to open the Eyes of your Soul, and consider yourself as in the Field of *Battle*, facing your Enemy, and under an absolute Necessity of engaging or perishing for ever. Imagine you see before you the Enemy, that particular *Vice*, or disorderly *Passion* you are endeavouring to subdue; imagine, I say, that this hideous *Monster* is coming to devour you.

At

At the same Time represent to yourself on your right Hand *Jesu Christ* your invincible Leader, attended by the *B. Virgin*, *St. Joseph*, and whole Legions of Angels and Saints, and particularly by the glorious Archangel *St. Michael*; on your left Hand, behold *Lucifer* and his Troops ready to support that *Passion* or Vice you contend with, and resolved to leave nothing undone to accomplish your Overthrow.

Imagine you hear your *Guardian-Angel* thus exhorting you: This Day you must exert yourself in order to subdue this *Enemy*, and all who seek your Ruin. Take Courage: let no vain Fears or Apprehensions seize you; since *Christ* your Captain is near at hand, with all the Power of Heaven, to protect you against all *Enemies*, and to prevent their ever reducing you, either by Force or Treachery, under their Subjection. Maintain your Ground, use Violence with yourself, whatever Pain it may occasion: call aloud on *Jesu* and *Mary*; beg the Assistance of all the Saints, and this being done, depend upon gaining the Victory.

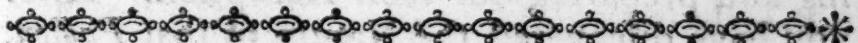
However weak you may be; however formidable your *Enemies* may seem either by their Numbers or Strength, still be not daunted: the Succours you have from *Heaven* are more powerful than all that *Hell* can send to destroy the Grace of *God* in your Soul. *God* who created and redeem'd you is no less than *All-mighty*, and more desirous of your *Salvation*, than the *Devil* can be of your *Destruction*.

Fight therefore valiantly; don't spare to mortify yourself; for it is by making continual

nual War on your disorderly Affections and vicious Habits, that you will gain the Victory, acquire the Kingdom of *Heaven*, and unite your Soul to *God* for all *Eternity*. Begin to fight from this Moment in the Name of the *Lord*, armed with a *Difidence* of yourself, a *Confidente* in *God*, *Prayer*, and a right Use of the several *Faculties* of your Soul.

With these *Arms* attack your *Enemy*, that predominant Passion you design to subdue, either by a noble Disdain, a courageous Resistance, repeated Acts of the *contrary* Virtue, or whatever Means *Heaven* furnishes you with for exterminating it out of your Heart. Never rest till you have subdued it : your *Perseverence* will be crown'd by the *sovereign Judge*, who with the whole Church triumphant is a Witness of your Behaviour.

I repeat it once more, you must not grow weary of this *War*. Consider, that all are obliged to serve and please *God* ; that there is an unavoidable Necessity of *fighting*, since whoever flies, exposes himself to be wounded and even destroyed : that after all, by revolting against *God*, and taking part with the *World* in a Life of *Sensuality*, the Difficulties are not diminish'd, for both *Body* and *Soul* must suffer extremely when devoted to *Luxury* or *Ambition*. And what greater Madness can there be, than not to dread much Trouble in this Life, succeeded by endless Torments in the *next* ; and yet shrink at small Difficulties, which must soon terminate in an *Eternity* of Bliss and the never-ending Enjoyment of *God* ?



C H A P. XVII.

Of the Order to be observed in encountering our Passions and Vices.

IT is of the greatest Consequence to be well apprized of the *Order* you must observe in warring against your Passions and Vices ; that you may not run on blindly, and fight with the Air, as many do, losing all the Fruits of their Labours.

You are therefore to begin by recollecting yourself, in order to examine with great Care what *Thoughts* and *Affections* your Mind generally entertains ; what *Passion* predominates in your Breast, which you must single out, as your greatest Enemy, to be first attack'd. But if the *Devil*, in order to draw off your Attention, should assail you from another Quarter, you must turn to that Side where the Danger is most pressing, and then immediately return to your first Design.



C H A P. XVIII.-

In what Manner we ought to curb the sudden Motions of our Passions.

IF you are not as yet well able to bear patiently *Injuries*, *Affronts*, and the other *Evils* of this Life, you will accustom yourself to it by foreseeing

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ing and preparing for their Reception. After you have discovered the Nature of that *Passion*, from which you suffer most, you must proceed to consider what *Persons* you have to deal with, what *Places* or *Business* you frequent, from whence you may discover what *Vexations* are like to happen.

But if any unforeseen Accident should happen, though it be of infinite Advantage never to be surprised by any Mortification or Trouble, we shall point out the Means of greatly alleviating *it*. The Instant you find yourself affected by any unforeseen injurious Treatment, put yourself on your Guard, give not way to *Vexation*, but raising your Mind to *God*, consider what has happened to be an Appointment of *Heaven*; that *God* himself, that tender Father as he is, has no other View in permitting *it*, but to purify you still more, and unite you still nearer to *himself*; and that he is infinitely pleased in seeing you *chearfully undergo* the greatest *Trials* for his Sake.

After this, turn your Thoughts on yourself, and thus upbraid your want of Courage: Cowardly Wretch! What, do'st thou shrink from a *Crofs* laid upon thee, not by *this*, or *that* Person, but from thy *Father* who is in *Heaven*? Then contemplating this *Crofs*, receive it not only with *Submission*, but even with *Joy*, saying: O *Crofs!* appointed for me by *Providence* from the beginning: O *Crofs!* which the Love of my crucified *Iesus* renders sweeter to me than the greatest sensual Delights, fix me from this Moment to *thee*, that I may be united to Him who, expiring in thy Arms, became my *Redeemer*.

But

But if you find yourself so much moved at first as to be incapable of raising your Mind to *God*, and that even your *Will* is affected by it, at least put a Stop to the Evil here, and whatever Disturbance it may have rais'd in your Heart, spare no Pains to conquer it, imploring the Assistance of *Heaven* with great Fervour. After all, the surest Way to repress these first Motions of disorder'd Affections, is to endeavour to root out the *Cause* of them beforehand. If you observe, for Example, that thro' an over-great Attachment to any thing, you are provoked as often as your Inclinations are thwarted, break off that *Attachment*, and you will enjoy a perfect Tranquillity.

In case the Uneasiness you feel, proceeds not from a *Fondness* for something pleasing, but from a *Dislike* to a *Person*, who on all Occasions is disagreeable to you ; the best Remedy for this *Evil* is to endeavour, notwithstanding, the *Antipathy* you feel, to love this *Person*, not only as created to the same Likeness of *God*, and redeemed with the same precious Blood of *Christ*, as yourself; but also because in bearing patiently with such *Defects*, you imitate your heavenly *Father*, whose *Love* and *Goodness* is extended to all without Exception.



C H A P. XIX.

In what Manner we ought to fight against Impurity.

THIS Vice must be encountered in a different Manner from others, and with greater Resolution. In order to this we are to distinguish three several Instants of Time; the First, that which precedes the Temptation; the Second, during the Temptation; the Third, that which succeeds,

1. Before the Time of Temptation we must carefully avoid every, even the least Occasion of Sin, shunning all those Persons whose Company is dangerous. Or if we are under a Necessity of conversing with them, let it be done with all possible Dispatch; let Modesty be visible in the Countenance, and Gravity season the Discourse, which must be Serious, not inclined to Familiarity or Mirth.

Presume not on your own Strength, tho' after many Years spent in the World, you have been Proof against the Force of Concubiscence. For the Devil of Lust often achieves in one Instant what whole Years could not effect. Sometimes he is very long in preparing for the Assault: but then the Blow is the severer, and the Wound the more dangerous for being *dissembled*, and coming when least expected.

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It must likewise be observed, and every Day's Experience shews it, that the Danger is always greatest in those *Engagements* where there is the least Appearance of *Evil*, because founded on the plausible Pretences of *Kindred, Gratitude, Obligations*, or in fine, the *Merit and Virtue* of the Person beloved. *Impure Inclinations* imperceptibly insinuate themselves into such Friendships, by frequent *Visits*, too long *Conversations*, and indiscreet *Familiarities*, till the *Poison* reaches the *Heart and Reason* is so far blinded as to connive at amorous *Glances*, tender *Expressions*, and jocose *Liberties* in Discourse, from whence violent and almost irresistible Temptations arise.

Fly therefore with the utmost Caution all *Occasions* of this Sin, of which you are more susceptible than *Straw* is of *Fire*. Rely not on your own *Virtue*, or a Resolution you may have taken rather to die than offend God: for however well disposed you may be to *Virtue*, the Frequency of such *bewitching* Conversations will kindle a *Fire* not to be extinguished. An impetuous Desire of satisfying your *Passion*, will render you deaf to the Remonstrances of your Friends; you will lose the Fear of God, *Reputation*, and even *Life* itself, will be set at nought; no, not the Flames of *Hell* will master the Fury of those sensual *Fires* kindled within your Breast. Seek therefore your Safety by *flying*; there is no other Way of escaping, since too great *Confidence* will end in eternal *Perdition*.

2. Shun *Idleness*: consider what you have to do, and comply exactly with all the *Duties* of your State of Life.

3. Obey your *Superiors* with great Alacrity; perform what they order, and in things the most *Mortifying* and contrary to your Inclinations shew the greatest *Cheerfulness*.

4. Never judge *rashly* of others, particularly in regard of *Impurity*. If any are so unhappy as to fall into such Disorders, and the Thing become publick, still you must not treat them with *Scorn* and *Contempt*, but pity their *Weakness*, and endeavour to make an Advantage of it by *humbling* yourself before the *All-mighty*; confessing that you are but *Dust*, and *Ashes*, a mere *Nothing*; by redoubling your Prayers, by flying with greater Exactness all *dangerous Company*, however little Reason you may have to suspect it. For if you give yourself a Liberty of judging *hardly* of your Brethren, *God* will permit you, both for your *Punishment* and *Amendment*, to fall into the same *Faults* for which you condemn others; that by such a *Humiliation*, discovering your own *Pride* and *Rashness*, you may seek the proper Remedies for both.

And tho' it may possibly happen that you avoid such shameful *Sins*, yet be assured that if you continue to form such *rash Judgments*, you are in great Danger of perishing.

5. If you perceive your Heart to abound with *spiritual Comforts and Delights*, beware of taking a secret *Complacency* in *yourself*; beware of imagining that you are arrived at *Perfection*, or that the *Enemy* is no longer capable of doing you any *Mischief*, because you seem to hold him in the utmost *Scorn* and *Contempt*:

or

or be assured, that the greatest Circumspection is now requisite to prevent a Relapse.

We are now to consider what regards the Time of Temptation. In the first Place we must examine whether the Cause from whence it proceeds be interior or exterior.

By exterior Causes, I mean the Curiosity of the Eyes or Ears where Decency suffers. Excess in the point of Apparel, too tender Friendships, and indiscreet Familiarities. Modesty and Decency are the proper Remedies for this Evil: they shut the Ears and Eyes against every thing that fullies the Imagination; but the sovereign Remedy, as we have already said, is to fly from all such Occasions of Sin.

Interior Causes proceed from a too good Plight of Body, Crouds of bad Thoughts, arising from wicked Habits or the Suggestions of the Devil.

When the Body has been too much indulged, it must be mortifyed by Fasting, Discipline, Watching, and other Austerities but always regulated by Discretion and Obedience.

As to unchaste Thoughts, from whatever Source they arise, we may drive them away, First, by a different Application to our several Duties: Secondly, by Prayer and Meditation.

Order your Prayer thus. When you perceive such Thoughts presenting themselves, and like to make any Impression, recollect yourself, and, speaking to Christ crucified, cry out: Sweet Jesus, haste to my Relief, lest I fall a Prey to my Enemies. Sometimes embracing a Crucifix, representing your dying Saviour, kiss

the Marks of the *sacred Wounds* on his Feet, and say with great Confidence and Affection : O adorable, thrice holy *Wounds* ! imprint your *Figure* deep in my *Heart*, fill'd as it is with *Abomination*, and preserve me from consenting to *Sin*.

With regard to *Meditation*, I am not of Opinion, when the *Temptation* is most violent, that you should, as several Authors advise in order to form a Horror of *Impurity*, consider the shameful and *insatiable* Nature of such *Sins*, that they are followed by *Disgust*, *Remorse*, and *Vexation*, often by the Loss of *Fortune*, *Health*, *Life*, *Honour*, &c. The Reason is, such Considerations are not proper on the Occasion, and frequently, instead of freeing us from the *Danger*, only serve to increase it : for if on the one Hand the *Understanding* drives away the *evil Thoughts*, such *Reflexions* naturally call them back on the other.

Thus the surest Way to be freed from them, is to remove not only *them*, but also the *Reflexions* directly *contrary* to *them* ; since in endeavouring to dissipate *them* by their *Contraries*, we renew the *impure Ideas*, and imprint them deeper without perceiving it. Satisfy yourself therefore with meditating on the *Life* and *Death* of our *Saviour* : and if during this holy Exercise, the same *Thoughts* should return and be more troublesome than before, as it may possibly happen, be not discouraged, nor abandon your *Meditation* : far from exerting yourself in driving them away, slight and contemn such wretched *Artifices* of the *Devil* : persist in meditating with

with all Attention possible on the *Death* of your *Saviour*, as nothing can be more efficacious for putting the foul *Fiend* to flight, tho' he should be determined never to desist.

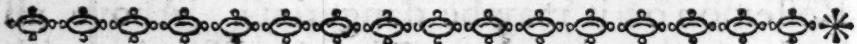
Conclude your Meditation with the following, or some such Prayer: O my *Creator* and *Redeemer*, save me from my *Enemies* through thy infinite *Goodness* and the Merits of thy *bitter Passion*. But remember in saying this, not to think on the particular *Vice* from which you are endeavouring to free yourself; since the least Reflexion on it may be dangerous. Above all be sure not to spend any Time in disputing with yourself how far you may have given way to the *Temptation*. Such a *Scrutiny* is an Invention of the *Enemy*, who under the specious Pretext of an imaginary Duty, studies to renew the Attack, or at least hopes to make some Impression with the *bad Thoughts* he had pour'd into your Mind.

When therefore it is not evident that you have consented to the *Evil*, let it suffice to declare in few Words, what has pass'd, to your *Ghostly Father*; and be ruled according to what he advises, without giving yourself any farther Trouble.

But be sure not to conceal any thing material, neither through Shame or any other Motive. For if *Humility* is requisite for subduing your *Enemies* in general, it is infinitely more so in the Case before us, as this *Vice* is, for the greatest Part, a just Punishment inflicted on *Pride*.

When the *Temptation* is vanish'd, you are to behave thus. Tho' you should enjoy a per-

feel *Tranquility* and think yourself safe, fly nevertheless, with the greatest Care, all Objects tending to *Temptation*; shut them out from your Mind entirely, tho' recommended with an *Appearance of Virtue* or some *imaginary Good*. Such *Pretences* are the *Illusions of a corrupt Nature*, or *Snares* laid by the *Devil*, who will transform himself into an *Angel of Light*, in order to drag you with him into the outward Darkness of *Hell* itself.



C H A P. XX.

In what manner we are to encounter Sloth.

THE making War against *Sloth* is of the greatest Importance; since this *Vice* is not only an *Obstacle* in our Way to *Perfection*, but delivers us over to the *Enemies* of our *Salvation*. If therefore you desire to fight against it in earnest, begin with avoiding all *Curiosity* and vain *Amusements*; wean your Affections from worldly Things, and quit all *Employments* that suit not with your *State of Life*.

Strive assiduously to comply with the *Inspirations of Heaven*, to execute the Orders of your *Superiors*, to do every Thing in due *Time* and *Manner*: never hesitate a Moment to do what is required: consider, the *first Delay* brings on a *second*, *this a third*, and thus we lose *Ground*; because the *Dread of Labour* encreases, as does the *Love of Ease*, the more it is indulged. Hence comes

comes that tedious Backwardness in applying to Business, or the total Neglect of it, so distasteful is *Labour*.

Thus is form'd a habit of *Sloth*, and hard it is to be shaken off, unless the *Shame* which attends an *indolent* Life happens to rouze us to greater *Diligence* and *Application* for the future.

We must likewise observe, that *Sloth* is a Poison which spreads itself through all the *Faculties* of the *Soul*, infecting not only the *Will*, by making *Labour* odious to it, but also the *Understanding*, blinding it in such a Manner, that the Resolutions of the *Slothful* are generally without Effect; and what ought to be done without Delay, is either neglected or referred to some other Time.

Take Notice moreover, that it is not sufficient to do *instantly* what is required, but the *proper* Time of doing it must be observed, and great *Application* employed to give it all the *Perfection* it can receive. For it must not be called *Diligence*, but an artful refined *Sloth*, which acts precipitately without any Regard whether Things are *well* or *ill* done; solicitous only to get rid of the *Trouble*, and to enjoy *Ease* again as soon as possible. This *Disorder* springs from not considering the great Value of a good Work, done in its due Time and Manner, wherein are surmounted all the Obstacles which *Sloth* opposes to those who begin to wage War against their *Vices*.

Reflect frequently therefore, that a single *Aspiration*, an ejaculatory *Prayer*, a *Genuflexion*, the least Mark of *Respect* for the *divine Majesty*, is

is of greater Value than all the *Treasures of the Earth*; and that every Time a Person mortifies his Inclinations, the Angels present him a *Crown of Glory* in Recompence for the *Victory* gained over himself. On the contrary, God withdraws his *Graces* by Degrees from the *Slothful* who neglect them, and heaps them on the *Fervent* who by their Means, as *faithful Servants*, may one Day enter into the *Joy of their Lord*. Mat. xxv. 21.

But if at first you find your Strength insufficient to undergo all the *Difficulties* and *Troubles* you are to encounter in your Road to *Perfection*; | you must acquire the Address of hiding them from yourself, that they may appear much less than the *Slothful* are apt to imagine them to be. When therefore many repeated *Acts* are requisite for acquiring some particular *Virtue*, and this to be continued for several Days in Opposition to numberless powerful *Enemies*; begin with forming such *Acts*, as if a few would suffice and your Trouble would soon end: attack your *Enemies* singly, as if you had but *one* to encounter, and be assured, thro' God's Grace, you will master them all. Thus the Vice of *Sloth* is shaken off, and the contrary *Virtue* acquired.

Observe the same Method with regard to *Prayer*. If an *Hour* is to be employed in Prayer, and the Time seems long, propose at first but half a Quarter, that got over, propose another, and thus the whole *Hour* will run away insensibly. But if during this Time, you feel a very great Repugnance to Prayer, don't render it absolutely disgusting; rather desist for a while;

while, which will have no ill Consequence, provided that soon after you return again to this holy *Exercise*.

This likewise will hold good in laborious Works. If you apprehend being overwhelm'd with Multiplicity of Busines, or the Difficulties attending it, and thro' Indolence are dispirited, begin with what ought first to be done, without reflecting on the rest; use great Application, for this being once well done, the others will follow with much less Trouble than you imagin'd. Thus it is you must face Difficulties, and never decline Labour. For you have Reason to fear lest Sloth should gain so much upon you, as to render insupportable even the first Steps towards Virtue, and imprint a Horror in your Mind even before you have experienced the least Difficulty.

For thus it happens to fearful dastardly Souls. They are in continual Dread of the *Enemy*, tho' never so weak and remote from them: ever apprehensive of having more laid upon them than they can bear, and from thence suffer, even when most at Ease. Know then, that in this Vice there lurks a *Poison*, which not only choaks the first Seeds of *Virtues*, but even destroys those that are already formed. Know, that what the *Worm* does in *Wood*, this effects in the *Spiritual Life*, employed too successfully by the *Devil* to draw *Men* into his Snares, especially such as aspire to *Perfection*.

Watch over yourself, and be addicted to *Prayer* and *good Works*; don't defer making your *Nuptial Robe*, till you are called upon to go

go forth and meet the *heavenly Bridegroom.* Every Day reflect, that *He* whose Goodness has preserved you till *Morning*, has not promised the same Favour till *Night*; nor that being come, can you depend on seeing the *following Day*. Let every Day, therefore, be spent as if it was to be the last; have nothing at Heart but the Will of *God*, and ever dread that rigorous Account he will demand of every single Moment.

One Word more. Tho' you may have dispatched much Business, and taken a great deal of Pains, yet look upon the Day as lost to you, and all your Labour unprofitable, unless you have gained many Victories over your *Passions* and your own *Will*; unless you have gratefully acknowledged the *Benefits* received from *God*, particularly his dying on a *Cross* for you; unless you have received as *Blessings*, whatever Chastisements that *Father of infinite Mercy* has inflicted, as a Means of expiating your manifold Crimes.



C H A P. XXI.

Of the proper Use of our Senses, and how to make them subservient to the Contemplation of divine Things.

THE greatest Care and unwearied Application is requisite for the right ordering our *Senses*; because the *sensitive Appetite*, from whence

whence all the Motions of corrupt Nature proceed, is doatingly fond of Pleasure. And as it is incapable of satisfying itself, it employs the *Senses* for attracting their several *Objects*, whose *Images* it transmits to the *Mind*. Thus do *sensual Pleasures*, by means of that Union which subsists between the *Body* and *Soul*, after spreading themselves through all the *Senses* capable of them, seize like a contagious Infection on the *Spiritual Faculties*, and effect the Corruption of the entire *Man*.

The following Remedies may be applied to so enormous an *Evil*. Keep a strict Watch over your *Senses*; never let them be employed but for some *good End*, some *advantageous Motive*, or *real Necessity*, but never for the Sake of *Pleasure*. If ever they go astray by Stealth as it were; if they transgress the Bounds which *Reason* prescribes; instantly recall them, and regulate Matters so, that instead of fixing upon *vain Objects* for the Sake of false Delights, they may be accustomed to draw from the same *Objects* great Helps for the sanctifying and perfecting the *Soul*; that the *Soul*, by recollecting herself, may rise from the Knowledge of *earthly Things*, to the Contemplation of the *divine Greatness*: This may be done in the following Manner.

When an *agreeable Object* presents itself to any of your *Senses*, do not be taken with what is *material* in it, but contemplate it with the Eye of the Understanding, and if there be any Thing in it which pleases the *Senses*, remember this is not from itself but from *God*, whose invisible

visible *Hand* created and endowed it with all it has of *Good* or *Beautiful*. Then rejoice to think that his *sovereign* and *independent Being* is the sole Author of all the charming Qualities his Creatures possess, containing them all in *himself*, with infinite *Pre-eminence* above the *most excellent* of created Beings.

When you contemplate any of the beautiful Works of the *Creation*, consider that of themselves they are *nothing*; soar in Spirit to the great *Hand* which produced them, place all your Delight in *Him*, saying, O my *God*! thou sole Object of my Wishes! How delightful is it to consider that the *Perfections* of *Creatures* are but a faint *Image* of thy *Glory*, who art the *universal Source* of all?

When you behold the *Verdure* of *Trees* or *Plants*, the *Beauty* of *Flowers*, &c. remember that they live but in that *All-mighty Wisdom* who invisibly cherishes *them*; say to *Him*: O living *God*! O sovereign *Life*! The Delight of my Soul! It is from *Thee*, in *Thee*, and through *Thee* that all Things live and flourish on the Earth.

At the Sight of *Animals*, raise your *Mind* and *Heart* to *Him* who gives them *Sensibility* and *Motion*; say with Respect and Love: Great *God*, who movest all Things, thy *Self* remaining *immovable*, how I rejoice when I consider thy *eternal fixed Duration*, incapable of the least Change!

When the *Beauty* of *Mankind* strikes your *Eye*, immediately distinguish between what appears to the *Sight* and what is only visible to the *Mind*; fix there, remembering that all *corporal*

corporeal Beauty flows from an *invisible Principle*, the *uncreated Beauty* of *God*. Say within yourself, See here an almost *imperceptible Drop* issuing from an *endless Source* and *immense Ocean*, from whence numberless *Perfections* continually flow! How my Soul is ravish'd when I reflect on that *Eternal Beauty*, the *Cause* of all that is lovely here!

When you meet with a Person endow'd with *Wisdom*, *Justice*, *Affability*, or any other *Virtue*, in the like Manner distinguish what he has of himself, from what he has receiv'd from *Heaven*, and then say, O *God* of all *Virtue*, I cannot express my Joy, when I consider, that all which is Good comes from *Thee*, and that all the *Perfections* of created *Beings* are a mere nothing when compared with *Thine*. I give *Thee* numberless Thanks for this and all the *Good* bestow'd on my *Neighbour* or *myself*. Pity my *Poverty*: be mindful how much I stand in need of such or such a *Virtue*.

When you have perform'd a *good Action*, reflect that *God* is the *Author* of it, and You but his *Instrument*; then raising your Eyes to him, cry out: O *sovereign Lord* of the *Univerſe*, It is with the greatest Pleasure I know, that of myself I can do nothing, that Thou art the first and principal *Cause of All Things*!

When you taste any thing pleasant to your Palate, consider that *God* alone is capable of giving it that Relish, so agreeable to you: place in *Him* all your Delight, and say within yourself. O my Soul, rejoice, that as without

God there can be no solid Content, so in Him all Happiness is found !

When you perceive any pleasant Scent, beware of confining yourself to the Pleasure arising from thence : mount in Spirit to Heaven, and, convinced that this comes from God, rejoice at it ; and beg of Him, that being the Author of all Sweetness, he will cause your Soul, freed from all sensual Pleasure, to elevate itself to Him like a sweet Perfume.

In fine, when you hear a Concert of Musick, think of God, and say to Him : 'O my God, my Heart is filled with Delight, when I contemplate thy divine Perfections, whose melodious Harmony is infinitely pleasing not only to Thy Self, but to Angels, Men, and created Beings.'



C H A P. XXII.

In what Manner sensible Things may help us to meditate on the Mysteries of our Saviour's Life and Passion.

I Have already shewn how we may rise from the Consideration of sensible Things, to the Contemplation of God's Greatness : learn now to make the same Things subservient to a lively Remembrance of the sacred Mysteries of the Life and Death of our Lord. Every Object in the Universe may conduce to this End.

Consider only, as we have already said, that God is the first Cause of All Things ; that He bestow'd

bestow'd upon his *Creatures*, the most sublime not excepted, their *Being*, *Beauty*, and all the *Perfections* with which they are endow'd. After this admire the infinite Goodness of this *sovereign Master of the Universe*, who condescended to become *Man*, and suffer an ignominious *Death* for your *Salvation*, permitting even his own *Creatures* to conspire against *Him* and nail *Him* to the *Cross*. But if you are desirous to enter into a Detail of his *Labours* and *Sufferings*, every thing about you will remind you of them.

If, for Example, you see *Weapons*, *Scourges*, *Cords*, *Thorns*, *Reeds*, *Nails*, *Hammers*, you will readily call to mind the several *Instruments* of his *Passion*. A poor *Cottage* may represent the *Stable* and *Manger* where *He* was born. The *Rain* falling on the *Earth*, will remind you of the *bloody Sweat* with which *He* water'd the *Garden of Olivet*: the *Stones* are Figures of the *Rocks* split at his *Death*. When you behold the *Sun* or the *Earth*, remember, when *He* expired, the *Earth* trembled and the *Sun* grew dark. When you see *Water*, think of that which flow'd from his *Side*; and so of a thousand other Objects.

When you *drink*, call to mind the *Vinegar* and *Gall*, with which that *amiable Saviour* was regaled by his *Enemies*. If you take too much Satisfaction in *Perfumes*, consider the Stench of the dead *Carcasses* with which *He* was saluted on *Mount Calvary*. In putting on your *Clothes*, recollect that the *Son of God* clothed *himself* with our *Flesh*; that we might be clothed with his *Divinity*. In putting off your *Clothes*, think you see *Him* stript and in the *Hands* of his *Executioners*.

ecutioners, on the Point of being scourged and nailed to a Cross for your Sake. When you hear any confused *Noise*, represent to yourself the horrible *Cries* of the enraged *Populace* against their *Lord*; *Take Him off, Take him off; crucify Him, crucify Him.*

As often as the *Clock* strikes; think how the *sacred Heart of Jesus* beat in the *Garden*, when *feiz'd* with that *mortal Agony* at the *Prospect* of the *cruel Torments* preparing for *Him*; or think you hear the strokes of the *Hammer* with which the *Soldiers* nailed *Him* to the *Cross*. In fine, whatever you suffer yourself, or see others undergo, be assured it is far short of the *Pains* both of *Body* and *Mind* your *Saviour* underwent during his *Passion*.



C H A P. XXIII.

Other means of employing to Advantage the Exteriour Senses on different Occasions.

HA V I N G already shewn in what Manner the *Mind* may be raised from *earthly* to *heavenly Things*, and contemplate the several *Mysteries of Jesus Christ*; I shall proceed to point out other Subjects of *Meditation*, that Persons of different *Tastes* may here find wherewithal to satisfy their *Devotion*: this will be of Service not only to the *weaker Sort*, but even to the more *Advanced*, who do not all take the same Method of attaining *Perfection*, nor are equally capable of *sublime Contemplations*. Nevertheless,

be

be not apprehensive that the Variety of *Me-*
thods should create any Perplexity: let Discre-
tion be your Guide: take the Advice of a
prudent *Director*: abandon yourself with great
Humility to what he prescribes, not only as to
what I am now speaking of, but also to what
I may say hereafter.

When therefore you behold any thing *pleasing*
and what is *esteemed* by the *World*, be convinced
that it is *viler* than the *Dirt* under your Feet;
infinitely short of what *Heaven* promises, whi-
ther you ought continually to tend, despising
every thing else.

When you look up to the *Sun*, reflect that your
soul, when adorn'd with the *sanctifying Grace*, is in-
comparably more bright and beautiful than all
the *Firmament* together; but that destitute of *it*,
she is fouler than *Hell* itself. In viewing the *Sky*,
soar in *Spirit* to *Heaven* itself, and there dwell,
where you are sure of reigning for all *Eternity*, if
you live in *Innocence* and *Sanctity* on *Earth*.

When you hear the warbling of *Birds*, think
of *Paradise*, where the Praises of *God* are sung
without ceasing; beg at the same time that *God*
would make you worthy to join with the Blessed
Spirits in singing his Praises to all *Eternity*.

If the Beauty of Creatures should charm you,
imagine you see the *Fiend*, concealed under those
bewitching Appearances, endeavouring to fling
you and destroy the Life of your *Soul*. Say to
him with a holy Indignation: Be gone *cursed Ser-*
pent; in vain do you hide yourself for my De-
struction. Then, turning to *God*; Blest be
thy *Name*, shall you say, who thus graciously

discovers and prevents the Snares of my *Enemy*! After this retire into the *Wounds* of your *Saviour*, as an undoubted Refuge: employ your Mind on the inexpressible Sufferings *He* underwent, to cleanse you from *Sin*, and to imprint in your Heart a Detestation of *sensual Pleasures*.

Another Method of avoiding the Force of the *Beauty* of Creatures, is to consider what a Change Death will certainly work in what now appears so charming. When you walk, consider every Step as so much advanced towards your *Grave*. The Flight of a *Bird*, or rapid Stream of a *River*, are slow when compared with the *Swiftness* of *human Life*. A *Storm* laying every thing waste, a Peal of *Thunder* shaking the Earth, reminds us of the *Last Day*, and bids us bow the Knee before our great *Judge*, adoring and beseeching *Him* to assist us, that we may prepare betimes for appearing before *Him*, without withering away through *Fear*.

But if you desire to take Advantage of an Infinity of *Accidents*, to which this *Life* is subject, you may take the following Method. If, for Example, you should suffer from *Heat*, *Cold*, or any other Inconvenience; if you are oppressed with *Grief* or *Melancholy*, consider the eternal *Decrees* of *Providence*, which for your Good has appointed this *Uneasiness*, and knows how to proportion it to your Strength. Thus with Joy will you discern the *paternal Love* and *Tenderness* the *All-mighty* bears towards you, which is evident in *His* giving you this Opportunity of serving *Him*, in the Manner most agreeable to *Him*.

Seeing yourself therefore in a Condition of
pleasing

pleasing *Him* more than ever, say : Now is accomplished in me the Will of *Him* who, in Compassion to me, from all Eternity appointed I should this Day undergo *this* Mortification! May *He* be for ever blessed! When any good *Thought* occurs, be firmly persuaded that it comes from *God*, and return due Thanks to the *Father* of all *Light*. When you read any pious Book, think it is the *Holy Ghost* who speaks to you and who dictated the Contents.

When you see a *Cross*, look upon it as the Standard of *Jesus Christ* your Captain, and know that if you stray ever so little from *Him* you will fall into the Hands of the most cruel *Enemies*: whereas if you follow *Him*, you will be received, cover'd with the Ensigns of *Victory*, into the Kingdom of *Heaven*.

When you behold an Image of the Blessed *Virgin*, offer your Heart to that Mother of *Mercy*; rejoice with her on her having always accomplished with the greatest Exactness the *Will* of *God*; on her having brought forth the *Saviour* of the World and nourished Him with her Milk. In fine, thank her for the Assistance she affords to all those who call upon her in their Struggles with the *Enemy* of Mankind. All the Images of the *Saints* will remind you of those valiant Soldiers of *Christ*, who fighting courageously till Death, have marked out the Road you must follow, if you will share in their Glory.

When you hear the Bell ring three Times for the *Angelical Salvation*, you may make a short Reflection on the Words which precede each *Hail Mary*. The first Time, return *God* Thanks for the solemn *Embassy* He sent to *Mary*, which

which begun the great Work of our Redemption. The second, rejoice with *Mary*, on the high Dignity to which *God* raised her for her profound Humility. At the third, adore the *Word* now made *Man*, and then acknowledge the Honour due to his *Blessed Mother* and the *Archangel Gabriel*. At each Time it is proper to bow the Head out of Respect, but particularly at the third.

These Acts may be exercised at any time. We shall assign others more peculiarly adapted to particular times of the Day, *Morning*, *Noon* and *Night*, but all regarding the *Mysteries* of our *Saviour's Passion*. We must not neglect frequently to call to Mind the cruel Martyrdom the *Blessed Virgin* underwent at that Juncture, nothing but *Ingratitude* itself can be forgetful of it.

At *Night* consider the cruel Affliction *she* felt from the *bloody Sweat*, and the seizing of *her Son Jesus* in the Garden, and all the Agonies of *her Mind* during that Night. In the *Morning* condole with *Her* for what *she* suffered in seeing *her beloved Son* dragged to *Pilate* and *Herod*, condemned to Death, and loaded with a heavy *Cross* to the place of Execution. At *Noon* contemplate the *Sword of Grief* which pierced the Soul of this afflicted *Mother*, when *she* saw *Him* crucified, expiring, and *his Side* open'd with a Launce.

These pious Reflections on the Grief of the *Blessed Virgin* may be continued from *Friday Evening* to *Saturday Noon*: The preceding Meditations may be made on other Days. Nevertheless, consult your own Devotion, as you find yourself affected with exterior Objects.

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In fine, to set down in few Words the best Manner of governing the *Senses*, regulate them so as never to suffer either *Love* or *Hatred* to enter your Heart on human Motives, but as the *Will of God* directs your Inclinations either to embrace or reject whatever Objects present themselves to your Mind.

But take Notice, in regard of this Variety of Practices pointed out for the better regulating your Senses, it is far from my Design to have you *entirely* employ'd in them. On the contrary, you ought for the most part to keep yourself re-collected and attach'd to *God*; your chief Employment must be an *interior* *Combat* against your *vicious Inclinations*, and the forming Acts of *contrary Virtues*. All that I propose is that you may use them on proper Occasions. For it must not be imagin'd, that any great Progress in *Devotion* will be made by employing a great number of *Exercises*, which, though commendable in themselves, yet, by ill Management, may perhaps only serve to *perplex* the Mind, increase *Self-love* and *Unsteadiness*; and consequently open a Gate to the *Illusions* of the *Devil*.

C H A P. XXIV.

How we are to govern the Tongue.

THE *Tongue* requires a strict Guard over it, by reason of the Propensity we have of discoursing of every thing agreeable to our Senses. This is to be attributed to a certain

Pride,

Pride, which inclines us to think ourselves more knowing than we really are, and thus, fond of our own Conceptions, we utter them with great *Self-complacency*, fancying we shine in Conversation, and expect the whole Company should be attentive to what we say.

It would be no easy Task to number the Evils arising from this detestable Vice. In general, we may say it occasions much Loss of Time; is a certain Sign of Ignorance and Folly, and is usually accompanied with *Calumny* and *Lies*; that it cools the Fervor of *Devotion*, gives new Strength to our disorderly Passions, and accustoms the Tongue to frivolous and idle Discourse.

In order to correct it, I would advise as follows. Never talk too much either to those who are little attentive to you, lest you tire them; or those who hear you with Pleasure, lest you be insensibly led to say what is not proper. Avoid talking loud or in a magisterial Tone: both are ungrateful to the Ear, and only betray much *Sufficiency* and *Presumption*.

Never discourse of yourself, your Kindred, or what you may have done, without an absolute Necessity, and even then let it be in as few Words as possible, and with great Modesty. If you meet with a Person who is the Subject of his own Discourse, neither despise nor imitate him, though all he says should tend to discover his Failings and cover him with Confusion. Rarely speak of your Neighbour or his Affairs, unless an Opportunity presents itself of saying something to his Praise. Speak willingly

willingly of God and his *immense Charity* for us: but lest you should not express yourself in a proper Manner, rather listen to others on that Subject, and treasure up what you hear.

As to what regards *worldly Discourse*, if it reach your *Ears*, at least let it not enter your Heart. But if you are obliged to hear it in order to give an Answer, look up from time to time to *Heaven*, where reigns your *God*, and from whence that *divine Majesty* condescends to behold even You, unworthy as you are. Weigh well what you intend to say, before it reaches your Lips. Be very circumspect, for you will always find a great Superfluity; and even when you have determined what to say, still retrench something of it, since in the End you will always perceive you have said too much.

Silence is of infinite Service in the *Spiritual Warfare*; and They who observe it, may be assured of the *Victory*. For generally speaking, it is accompanied with a *Diffidence* of themselves and a *Confidence* in *God*, a great Relish for *Prayer*, and Facility in *virtuous Exercises*.

In order to engage You with a Love of *Silence*, consider the great *Advantages* arising from it, and the numberless *Evils* which spring from the *contrary Vice*. Nay more; if you desire to accustom yourself to few Words, hold your Peace even when you may be allowed to speak; provided your Silence be not prejudicial to yourself or others. Be sure to avoid all unprofitable Discourse: prefer the Company of *God*, his *Saints* and *Angels*, to that of Men, In fine, if you are always mindful of

of the War you have undertaken, you will scarce find time to breathe, much less to throw away in frivolous and vain Conversation.



C H A P. XXV.

That the Soldier of Jesus Christ, who has resolved to engage and conquer his Enemies, must avoid, as much as possible, whatever may disturb his Peace of Mind.

WHenever we have lost our *Peace of Mind*, we omit nothing that can contribute to the Recovery of it: though, let what will happen, we can never lose it, or have it disturbed, but through our own Fault. It is true, we are to be sorry for our *Sins*, but this Sorrow ought to be calm and moderate, as I have often said. We ought to compassionate all Sinners, and interiorly lament their Destruction: but still this Compassion must be void of all Vexation and Trouble, as it springs from a Motive of pure Charity.

Even that Infinity of Evils, to which this Life is Subject, as *Sickness, Wounds, Death, the Loss of Friends and Kindred, Plagues, War, Fire*, and the like, which Men dread as contrary to their Nature, ever averse to suffering; all these, I say, by the Assistance of the divine *Grace*, may not only be receiv'd with Submission from the Hand of God, but even become Subjects of Joy, if we consider them as *wholesome Punishments inflicted*

inflicted on Sinners, or Opportunities given the
Just of laying up a *Treasure of Merits.*

For on both these Considerations the *All-mighty*
delights in afflicting Us ; but this is certain,
that as long as our Minds are resign'd to
his Will, the severest Trials can never disturb
our *Peace*. Besides, all Vexation is highly
displeasing to *Him*; because whatever Nature
it is of, it is always sinful, as arising from a
bad Principle, the *Love of ourselves*. Endeavour
therefore to foresee any Uneasiness that may
happen, and provide with Patience for its
Reception. Consider that the *Evils of this Life*,
how frightful soever they may appear, they
are only *imaginary*, as they cannot deprive us
of *real Goods*; that *God* ordains or permits them
for the Reasons alledged above, or for others,
which, though hidden from us, are truly equi-
table.

Thus preserving an *even Mind* in all Occur-
rences of Life, your Advantage will be very
great: but without it, your pious Exercises
will come to nothing. Not to mention how
much you will be exposed by *Anxiety* to the In-
sults of your *Enemy*, without being able to dis-
cern the sure and ready Path to *Virtue*; the
Devil is ever solicitous to banish *Peace* from
your Mind, knowing well that God only dwell-
there in *Peace*, and that it is in *Peace* that *He*
works his Wonders. Hence it is that *Satan* em-
ploys all his Cunning for destroying it; even in
order to surprise us, he does not hesitate to in-
spire seemingly good Designs, but which are other-
wise

wise in Effect, as is easily discover'd, but particularly by their disturbing our inward Peace,

To remedy so dangerous an Evil, when the *Enemy* endeavours to put us upon some new Design, let us beware of giving it Entrance too hastily into our Hearts : first let us renounce all Affection arising from *Self-love*; then offer the Design to *God*, begging with great Earnestness, that he will manifest to us whether it comes from *Him* or our *Enemy*, and, in order to it, our *Director* ought to be consulted. Even when we are assured that such a Design is the Motion of the *Holy Ghost*, we ought to defer the Execution of it, till we have mortified our too great Eagerness in executing it. For a *good Work*, preceded by such a Mortification, is much more pleasing to *God*, than when accompanied with too solicitous an Ardor; and oftentimes the Merit of the *Work*, falls short of that of the *Mortification*. Thus rejecting all pernicious Motions, and not executing even the *good* Ones, till we have suppress'd the Effects of *Self-love*, we shall preserve a perfect Tranquility of Mind.

It is moreover requisite to contemn a certain *interior Regret*, which, though seemingly coming from *God*, as being a Remorse of *Conscience* for past Faults, yet is doubtless the Work of the *Devil*, as the following Test will clearly discover. If the Regret tends to our greater *Humiliation*, if it encreases our *Fervour* in performing good Works and our *Confidence* in the *Divine Mercy*, we ought to receive it with great *Thankfulness* as a Gift from *Heaven*. But if it occasions *Anxiety*; if it renders us *dispirited*, *slothful*,

lothful, timorous and backward in our Duty, we may certainly conclude, that it proceeds from the Suggestions of the Enemy and ought to pass it over without the least Regard.

Besides this, as it frequently happens that our Vexations arise from the Evils of this *Life*, there are two Things to be done, as Preservatives against it. The first is, to consider what will be the Consequence of such Evils, whether they will destroy in us the *Desire* of attaining *Perfection*, or *Self-love*; if they only tend to diminish *Self-love*, one of your greatest Enemies, we ought not to complain: rather let us receive them with *Joy* and *Thanksgiving*, as so many Favours which *God* bestows on us. But if they incline us to swerve from the Path of *Perfection*, and make *Virtue* distasteful, we must not be cast down and lose our *Tranquility of Mind*, as we shall see hereafter.

The second is, to raise our Hearts to *God*, and receive without Exception whatever He ordains, fully persuaded that every *Cross* He is pleased to inflict, will certainly prove an endless Source of *Blessings*, if we, for want of knowing better, do not neglect to improve it to the best Advantage.

C H A P. XXVI.

What we are to do on receiving any Hurt in the Spiritual Combat.

WHEN you perceive yourself wounded, that is, fallen into any Sin, whether through *Frailty* or deliberately through *Malice*, be not too much cast down: do not abandon yourself to Grief and immoderate Vexation; but, addressing yourself to *God*, say with a great, but humble, *Confidence*: I am now convinced, O my *God*, that I am nothing: for what can be expected from so blind and wretched a Creature as I am, but *Sin* and *Folly*? Dwell on this Thought in order to your greater Confusion, and a lively Sorrow for your Fault.

Then, with great Calmness, shew your *Dissatisfaction* against those *Passions* which reign most in your Breast, especially that which occasion'd your Misfortune. *Lord*, shall you say, What might I not have done, had not your infinite Goodness come in to my Assistance!

Then return Millions of Thanks to that *Father of Mercies*, who far from resenting the Affront you have given, stretches forth his *Hand*, lest you fall into the same disorder again.

In fine, full of Confidence in *Him*, say: Manifest, O my *God*, what Thou art: let an humble *Penitent* partake of thy infinite Mercy; forgive my Offences; suffer me not to wander from Thee: strengthen

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strengthen me with thy *Holy Grace*, that I may never more offend *Thee*.

This done, don't perplex yourself with examining whether God has pardoned you or not. This is a needless Trouble and Loss of Time, proceeding only from *Pride* and the Illusion of the *Devil*, who under such specious pretexts seeks to molest you. Rather abandon yourself to the divine *Mercy*, and pursue your usual Exercises with as much Tranquility as if you had not committed any Fault. Though you should fall several Times in a Day, yet lose not a just Confidence in him. Observe the Method I have set down, after a second or third, after the last *Relapse*; conceiving every Time a greater Contempt of yourself, a greater Abhorrence of Sin, and put yourself more on your Guard than ever. This will greatly perplex your *Enemy*, because it is very pleasing to *God*; the *Devil* will gain nothing but Confusion, finding himself baffled by one, he has so often overcome. And consequently he will use his utmost Endeavours to induce you to change your Method; and in this he frequently succeeds, where Persons do not keep a strict Watch over the Motions of their Heart.

And the greater Difficulty you meet with in this, the greater Efforts you must use in conquering yourself. Be not satisfied with once doing it, but repeat this holy Exercise frequently, though but one Fault was committed. If therefore in such a Case you feel great Vexation and your Courage sinks, you must first endeavour to recover your *Peace of Mind* and *Confidence in God*. Then raise your Heart to *Heaven*, and be per-

suaed that the Trouble which sometimes follows the Commission of a Fault, is not so much a *Sorrow* for having offended *God*, but a *Dread* of *Punishment* which is more apprehended than any thing else.

The Means of recovering this *Peace*, so desirable and absolutely necessary, is to think no more on the Fault, but to contemplate the immense *Goodness* of *God*, who is ever ready, and even desires to pardon the most enormous Sinners, and leaves nothing undone to bring them back to their Duty, to unite them entirely to *Himself*, to sanctify them in *this Life*, and make them eternally happy in the *next*. When these and the like Considerations have restor'd your Tranquility, then weigh the Heinousness of your Fault according to the method prescribed above.

In fine, when you approach the *Sacrament* of *Penance*, which I would advise to be done often, call to Mind all your Sins, and declare them sincerely to your *spiritual Father*, renewing your Grief for having committed them, and your Purpose of doing so no more for the future.



C H A P. XXVII.

In what Manner the Devil tempts and seduces those who are willing to embrace Virtue, or are still plunged in Vice.

IT is certain the Devil is continually seeking the Destruction of Mankind, and has various Ways

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Ways of working his ends. In order therefore to let you see some of his *Stratagems*, we will consider different sorts of Persons in different Dispositions. Some, overwhelm'd with Iniquity, think not of breaking their Chains: Others are willing to free themselves from their Thraldom, but do nothing towards it: Others again think themselves in a good way, but by that Means are very far from it: Others, in fine, after attaining a high Degree of *Virtue*, fall into a more dangerous Condition than before. In the Following Chapters we shall consider these several sorts of Persons.



C H A P. XXVIII.

The Artifices employed by the Devil to complete the Perdition of those he has drawn into Sin.

WHEN the *Devil* has entangled a Soul in *Sin*, all his Artifices are employed to take off *her* Thoughts from every thing capable of discovering to *her* the horrible State in which *she* is engaged. Not content with stifling all Inspirations from *Heaven*, and suggesting of wicked Thoughts in their room, *he* endeavours to plunge *her*, by furnishing dangerous Opportunities, into fresh Crimes, either of the same, or a more enormous Nature. Hence it is, that deprived of the Light of *Heaven*, *she* heaps Sins on Sins, and hardens *herself* in Iniquity. Thus *she* wallows in the Mire, and rushes from Darkness to Darkness, from one *Alys* to another,

ether, always flying farther than ever from the Way of Salvation, and multiplying *Relapse* upon *Relapse*, unless supported by an extraordinary Grace from *Heaven*.

The most efficacious Remedy against this Evil, is to receive without the least Resistance the divine *Inspirations*, which will recall *her* from *Darkness* to *Light*, from *Vice* to *Virtue*; let *her* cry out with great Fervor, *Lord assist me!* *Haste to my Relief!* Suffer me not to remain any longer in the Shades of *Sin* and *Death*! These and the like Ejaculations must be often repeated; and if it can be done, let *her* have immediate Recourse to her *Director* for his Advice against the Assaults of the *Enemy*. If this is not feasible, let *her* prostrate *herself* before a *Crucifix*. Let *her* invoke the *Queen* of *Heaven*, and implore her Compassion and Assistance. For *she* may be assured, that the Victory entirely depends on exerting *herself* with great Diligence, as we shall see in the following Chapter.



C H A P. XXIX.

The Inventions of the Devil to prevent the entire Conversion of such as, convinced of the bad State of their Conscience, have some Thoughts of amending their Lives. How it happens that their good Designs are frequently ineffectual.

THOSE who are sensible of the wretched State of their Souls, and are willing to put

a Stop

a Stop to it, are often deluded by the *Devil*, who endeavours to perswade them they have a long Time to live, and consequently may safely defer their Conversion. He represents to them, that such an Affair or Lawsuit must first be ended, such a Busines finished, before they can sufficiently extricate themselves in order to follow a Life of Devotion, and peaceably perform the several Exercises of it.

This Snare has and does daily entangle many. But they may all justly attribute its Success to their own supine Negligence in an Affair wherein the Glory of God and their own Salvation ought only to be considered. Let all such, instead of saying *To-morrow, To-morrow*, cry out *Now, Now*. And why *To-morrow*? How can I be sure of living till it comes? Even were I sure of it, would it look like saving my Soul, if I deferr'd my Repentance? Would it look like aiming at *Victory*, if I exposed myself to fresh *Wounds*?

It is therefore past all Dispute, that a *ready Compliance* with the Inspirations of *Heaven*, is the only Means of escaping this *Illusion*, as well as that mentioned in the preceding Chapter. When I say *ready Compliance*, I would not be understood to mean mere *Desires*, or feeble and barren *Resolutions*, by which so many are deceived, for the following Reasons. *First*, such Desires and Resolutions have not for their Foundation a *Difference* of ourselves and a *Confidence* in *God*. The Consequence of which is, that a Soul puffed up with a secret Pride, is so blind as to take that for *solid Virtue*, which is only so in Appearance. The Remedy for this Evil, and the

the Light requisite for discovering it, must be obtain'd from *Heaven*, which suffers us to fall, that our Eyes being open'd by woeful Experience, we may remove the *Confidence* we had in ourselves, placing it in the *Divine Grace*, and exchange an almost imperceptible Pride, for an humble Knowledge of our own Weakness. Thus good Resolutions will never be *effectual*, unless *firm* and *steady*: neither can they be firm and steady, unless founded in a *Diffidence* of ourselves and a *Confidence* in *God*.

The second Reason is, that when we conceive some good Purpose, we only fix our Eyes on the *Charms* and *Excellence* of *Virtue*, which draw to it even the most feeble Minds, but never consider the *Difficulties* of attaining it; whence it comes that *cowardly* Minds are dashed at the first Appearance of *Trouble*, and fly from their Enterprize. Upon this Account you ought rather to place before your Eyes the *Difficulties* which occur in the Acquisition of *Virtues*, than the *Virtues* themselves; think often of it, and prepare yourself accordingly. Know moreover, that the greater Courage you shew in conquering *yourself* or defeating your *Enemies*, the sooner will the Difficulties diminish, and by degrees entirely vanish.

The third Reason is, the too great Regard we have to our own private Advantage, preferable to *Virtue* and the *Will* of *God*: this frequently happens when sooth'd with *Consolations* in time of Affliction. For finding ourselves destitute of all *earthly* Comfort, we take up a Resolution of attaching ourselves to *God* and his *Service*. That

we may be blameless on this Head, let us beware of misusing the Favours of *Heaven*: let us be humble and circumspect in forming good Resolutions: let us guard against all indiscreet Fervor, which may rashly engage us in making Vows beyond our Abilities.

If we groan under *Affliction*, let us barely propose to carry our *Cross* as we ought, it coming from *God*, placing all our Glory therein, without seeking any Alleviation from *Earth* or even *Heaven* itself. Let us ask, let us wish for no more, but that the *All-mighty* vouchsafe to support Us under the *Trial*, and that we may patiently undergo whatever *He* is pleased to inflict.

C H A P. XXX.

Of the Mistake of several who think themselves in the Way to Perfection.

THE *Enemy* being defeated in his first and second Attack, will not fail of renewing it a third Time. He endeavours to make us forget the *Vices* and *Passions* we actually labour under, and fills our Imagination with vain Projects of a chimerical Perfection, to which he knows we shall never reach. By this Contrivance we receive frequent and dangerous *Wounds*, without ever thinking how to remedy them. For such imaginary Desires and Resolutions pass upon us for real Effects, and through a secret Pride we value ourselves as great *Saints*.

Thus

Thus at the very Time, when the least Contradiction or Affront is insupportable, we amuse ourselves with imagining we are ready to suffer the greatest Torments, even the Pains of *Purgatory*, for the *Love of God*.

The Deceit lies in this, that our sensitive Part, nothing affected with Sufferings at a Distance, boldly compares itself with those who actually bear the greatest Pains with an unwearied Patience. To avoid so dangerous a Snare, we must resolve to fight, and actually engage those numerous Enemies we have at hand. This will quickly discover whether our Resolutions are cowardly or courageous, imaginary or real; and thus we shall advance to *Perfection* through the Road the *Saints* have marked out.

As to those *Enemies* who rarely molest us, we need not give ourselves much trouble about them, unless we have Reason at some particular time to expect an Attack from them. In such a Case, we must prepare for their Reception by a firm Resolution to conquer. But however strenuous our *Resolutions* may be, let us beware of counting upon them as so many *Victories*; even though we should have for some time practised Acts of *Virtue*, and made a considerable Progress therein. Let *Humility* ever accompany us; let our *Weakness* be always before our Eyes, and our *Confidence* placed in *God* alone; let us frequently beseech *Him* to strengthen Us during the *Fight*, and shield us from all Danger: to banish in particular from our Breasts all *Presumption* and *Confidence* in our own Abilities. In this Manner we may aspire to the most sublime *Perfection*; though

we may possibly find great Difficulty in surmounting some *Frailities*, which God, is pleas'd to leave us in order to *Humble* us, that we may not lose the little *Merit* already acquired by our good Works.



C H A P. XXXI.

The Artifices employ'd by the Devil to make us forsake the Path of Virtue.

THE fourth Artifice, which, as I have said, the Devil employs to impose on those who are advancing in the Way to *Perfection*, is to put them upon ill-timed Designs, though otherwise commendable, to the End that desisting from such Exercises of *Virtue* as are requisite, he may engage Them insensibly in vicious Habits.

For Example. A sick Person bears his Illness with great Resignation; the *Enemy*, dreading lest he acquire an habitual *Patience* puts in his Head many pious Works he might perform if in Health; he persuades the sick Man, that then he would not fail to do great Service to *God*, his *Neighbour*, and his own *Soul*. When the *Fiend* has gain'd so far as to make him desirous of Health, he contrives to make him uneasy under the Disappointment, and the more earnest the *Wishes*, the greater the *Solicitude*. The *Enemy* does not stop here, but urges him to great *impatience* in his Sicknes, which is represented as an Obstacle to those chimerical Designs the sick

Man passionately affects as more acceptable to God.

This Point being gained, the good *Designs* are effaced by Degrees, and nothing left but a criminal *Solicitude* to be freed from *Sickness*, which is soon attended with all the Evils arising from *Vexation* and *Impatience*. And thus instead of the Practice of an habitual *Virtue*, the very opposite *Vice* takes place.

The Means of preventing this Illusion, is to beware of forming any *pious Designs*, incompatible with the State of suffering, with which you are visited; for, incapable as you are of executing them, the only Consequence will be *Anxiety* and *Vexation*. Be persuaded, with great Humility and Resignation, that when *God* shall please to lift you up again, all these good Desires, which you now form, very likely may prove ineffectual for want of Courage to put them in Execution. At least imagine, that *God*, by a secret Disposition of *Providence*, or in Punishment of past Offences, denies you the Satisfaction of performing such a good Work, and chuses to behold you *resigned* to his *Will*, and *humbled* under his *All-powerful Hand*.

Behave in the same Manner, when, either by the Direction of your *Ghostly Father*, or for some other Reason, you are obliged to refrain for a Time from the *Holy Communion*. Be not cast down by Uneasiness; but renounce your own *Will*, and conform yourself to that of *Heaven*, saying: Did not *God*, the Searcher of Hearts, see in me some Failing or Ingratitude, I should not be thus deprived from approaching *Him*. Let

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his Name be for ever blessed who thus discovers to me my *Unworthiness*. I am fully persuaded, O Lord, that in all the Trials Thou art pleased to appoint, thou requirest nothing of me, but that bearing them with *Patience* and a Desire of pleasing *Thee*, I may offer to *Thee* a Heart ever conformable to thy Will ; that taking up thy Habitation there, it may be replenished with *divine Consolations*, and secured against the Power of Hell, which would ravish it from *Thee*. O my Creator and Redeemer, dispose of me as to *Thee* seemeth good ! May thy divine Will be now and evermore my Strength and Support ! All I demand is, that my Soul being cleansed from every thing displeasing to *Thee*, and adorn'd with all Virtues, may be in a Condition not only to receive *Thee*, but to comply with whatever Thou art pleased to appoint.

Those who carefully put in practice what is here set down, may be assured, that though they should be moved to undertake some Work of Piety beyond their Abilities, whether such a Motion be purely natural, at the Instigation of the Devil to make Virtue distasteful to them, or be inspired from Heaven for a Trial of their Obedience ; they may be assured, I say, that it will prove a Means of advancing in the Way of Salvation, and of serving God in the most acceptable Manner : wherein alone *True Devotion* consists.

Observe moreover, that when you employ any Means, lawful in themselves, and such as the Saints used, to remove an *Infirmity* or any other troublesome Inconveniencie, beware of

being too eager and solicitous for the Success. Entirely resign'd, propose nothing to yourself but the holy Will of God. For, how can you tell whether by these or more powerful Means He designs to free you from your Troubles? If you act otherwise, you alone will be the Sufferer: for perhaps you may not be indulged in what you so passionately desire, from whence nothing but *Impatience* will follow: or if you guard against it, still your *Patience* will be fullied with many Imperfections, and consequently less agreeable and less meritorious in the Sight of God.

There is a secret Artifice of Self-love, I must not omit, which on many Occasions disguises our Failings, though in themselves considerable and remarkable enough. A sick Person, for Example, who takes his Illness much to Heart, would have it believed that his *Impatience* springs from a justifiable Cause. It is not, according to him, properly *Impatience*, but a commendable Regret for his Faults, of which this Sicknes is the Punishment, or an Uneasiness for the Trouble it occasions to those about him. The ambitious Man, who laments his not obtaining such or such an Employment, behaves in the same Manner. He would make you believe his repining is not to be attributed to *Vanity*, but to other commendable Motives, which he knows very well would have very little Influence on him on other occasions. Just so the sick Man, who pretends so much Uneasiness on Account of those who tend him,

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is no sooner well, but he is utterly unconcerned at what they suffer in tending others.

This is a Demonstration that his *Impatience* is not owing to the Sufferings of others, but to a secret Horror of having his own Inclinations thwarted. Whoever desires to avoid these Rocks, must resolve to suffer patiently, as we have said before, all the *Crosses* inflicted on him in this Life, from whatever Quarter they come.



C H A P. XXXII.

The last Artifice of the Devil, to make even the Practice of Virtue become Occasions of Sin.

TH E old Serpent takes Opportunities of tempting us even by the Means of Virtue itself. He inspires us with Esteem and Complacency for ourselves, and lifts us up to that pitch that we cannot escape the Snares of *vain Glory*. Wherefore fight without ceasing, and fortify yourself with the Knowledge of your own *Nothingness*: Be ever mindful that of yourself you *are* nothing, *know* nothing, *can do* nothing; that you are full of Sin and Misery, and deserve nothing but *eternal Perdition*. Let this important Truth be always before your Eyes: Let it be a kind of *Intrenchment*, which you must never quit; and if any Thoughts of *Vanity* and *Presumption* arise, repel them as the most dangerous *Enemies* who have vow'd your Destruction.

But if you desire to attain a perfect Knowledge of yourself, take the following Method. As often as you look upon yourself or your Actions, carefully distinguish between what is your own, from what is owing to *God* and his *Holy Grace*; and then let the Esteem you have for yourself, rest upon what is properly yours. If you consider what past before you came into the World, you will find that from all Eternity you were just nothing, utterly incapable of doing the least thing to deserve a *Being*. If you consider this *Life*, which you only hold thro' *God's infinite Mercy*, what would you be without his Support, what but a *mere nothing*? And would not you return every Instant to what *his Omnipotence* drew you from, unless continually preserved by *him*?

This therefore is unquestionable, that what is properly *your own*, deserves not *your Esteem*, and much less that of *others*. If consider'd in a State of *Grace*, and the Performance of *good Works*, still you have no reason to value yourself: For without the Assistance of *Heaven*, where would be your *Merit*, what Good could you perform?

If after this you consider the frightful Multitude of Sins you either *have committed*, or *might have committed*, had not *God* preserved you from them, you will find by reckoning up not only the Years and Days, but the *Crimes* and *vicious Habits*, you will find, I say, that as one *Vice* draws on another, your *Iniquities* might have been innumerable, and your *Guilt* equal to that of *Devils*. These Considerations ought

ought daily to increase your *Contempt* of yourself, and *Gratitude* for so many Obligations to the divine *Goodness*, instead of assuming to yourself the Glory due to it.

But remember, that whatever Sentence you pass upon yourself, let it be strictly conformable to *Truth*, and that *vain Glory* does not creep in. For tho' you are more sensible of your own Misery, than a Man blinded by *Self-love*, yet you will be much more criminal and deserve a severer Punishment than he, if, with such a Knowledge, you are desirous of passing upon the World for a *Saint*.

In order therefore that this Knowledge may secure you against *vain Glory*, and render you pleasing to *Him* who is the *Father* and *Pattern* of the *humble*; it is not sufficient to have a mean Opinion of yourself, even so as to think yourself unworthy of all *Good* and only deserving of *Evil*: But you must be willing to be despised by others; you must dread hearing yourself praised, receive *Contempt* with *Joy*, and take all Opportunities of debasing yourself. Set at nought what the *World* will say of you when busied in the most servile good Works. Only be careful on these Occasions that your real Motive be *Humility*, and not the Effects of *Pride* and a stubborn *Haughtiness*, which, under the Appearance of a *Christian Courage*, despises the Discourse of *Worldlings*, and contemns their Judgments.

If any one should shew an *Esteem* and *Affection* for you, or commend any Qualifications you may have received from above, recollect

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yourself immediately, and on the Principles of *Truth* and *Justice* we have just now establish'd, say in your Heart with all Sincerity : Suffer me not *O Lord*, to rob thee of thy *Glory*, by attributing to *myself* what is entirely owing to thy *Holy Grace* ! To thee be the Honour and Praise, let Shame and Confusion be my Portion ! In regard of the Person who praises you, say from the bottom of your Heart : What Motive can he have for praising me ? What Perfection or Good can he discern here ? *God* alone is good, and only *his Works* praise worthy. Humble yourself in this Manner ; and give to *God* what is *God's*. This will preserve your Heart from *Vanity*, and you will merit greater Graces every Day than other.

If the Remembrance of any *Good* perform'd, occasions a vain *Complacency* in yourself, stifle it instantly, by reflecting that those *good Works* came from *God*, not from You, and say with great *Humility*, as if speaking to them : I know not what gave birth to you in my *Heart*, or how any thing commendable could spring from such an *Abyss* of *Sin* and *Corruption*. *God*, not I, must have produced you and brought you to Perfection. *Him* I ought to acknowledge as the Author ; it is *Him* I will and ought to thank ; to *Him* I refer all the Praise so unjustly bestow'd upon me.

Consider in the next Place, that in all the *pious Works* you may have perform'd, so far from having exactly corresponded with the abundance of *Grace* and *Light* with which *God* then favour'd you, that even many Deficiencies

cies accompanied them; a Purity of *Intention*, a proper *Fervor*, a due Diligence in the Execution was wanting. Thus upon a strict Scrutiny, instead of *vain Glory*, *Confusion* must be the Consequence, since so little Advantage, or rather such a bad Use, has been made of so much *Grace*.

If, after this, you compare your Actions with those of the *Saints*, you will blush at the Difference. But if you proceed to compare them with what the *Son of God* perform'd, whose whole Life was one perpetual *Cross*, abstracting from the *infinite Dignity* of his *Person*, and only considering the Greatness of his *Sufferings* and the *Purity* of his *Love* in undergoing them, you will be constrain'd to avow you have neither done nor suffer'd any thing in comparison with *Him*.

In fine, if you lift up your Eyes to *Heaven*, and there contemplate the *Majesty* of *God*, to whom infinite Services are due, you will be convinced that all your *good Deeds* ought rather to be a subject of *Fear* than of *Vanity*. Whatever pious Work you do, always say with a profound *Humility*, *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner*. Luke xviii. 13.

Be not subject to publish the Favours you have receiv'd from *God*. This is generally displeasing to *Him*, as *He* was pleased to declare in the following Manner. Appearing one Day to a great *Saint*, under the Form of an *Infant*, she ask'd him to recite the *Hail Mary*: Which he immediately complied with, but stopp'd when he had repeated those Words, *Blessed art thou amongst*

amongst Women, unwilling to add what was in his own Praise. Being pres'd to finish what he had begun, he disappear'd, leaving the devout Soul replenish'd with Consolation, and more than ever convinced of the Importance of Humility, by the Example *He* was pleas'd to give.

Learn moreover to humble yourself in all your Actions, as they are lively Representations of your own Nothingness. On this are grounded the several *Virtues*. For as *God* in the beginning created our *first Parent* out of nothing ; so *He* continues to build all *Spiritual Edifices* on this confess'd Truth, that of ourselves we are nothing. Consequently, the more we humble ourselves, the higher the Building rises ; and in Proportion as we sink and reach the depth of our *Nothing*, the *Sovereign Architect* lays on the solid Stones employ'd in rearing the *Structure*. Imprint deep therefore in your Mind, that you can never descend too low, and that if there is any thing *infinite* in a created Being, it must be his *Weakness* and *Wretchedness*. O heavenly Knowledge, which makes us happy here and glorious hereafter ! O admirable Light, piercing thro' the Darkness of this *Nothing*, in order to enlighten our Souls and raise our Minds to *God* ! O precious, but unknown Jewel, which shineth thro' the Filth of our Sins ! O *Nothing*, the Contemplation of which, puts all Things in our Power !

This is a Subject I could treat of without ever finishing. Whoever desires to honour the *divine Majesty*, must despise himself, and wish the same Treatment from others. Humble

ble yourself before every one, lay yourself at the Feet of the whole World, if you are willing that *God* should be glorified in you, and you in *Him*. In order to unite yourself to *Him*, fly all Grandure; for *He* flies from all who extoll themselves; chuse always the lowest Place, and *He* will descend from his Throne to embrace you with the greater Love, the more you are fond of Humiliations, and of being trampled under Foot as the least deserving of all Mankind.

If no less than *God*, who to promote a closer Union with you, became the last of Men, inspires you with such humble Sentiments, be sure you frequently return *Him* due Thanks. Thank likewise all who contribute to preserve them by their ill Usage to you, or imagine you incapable of bearing patiently an Affront; thank, I say, all such, and let nothing prevail on you to complain against them.

But if notwithstanding all those powerful Considerations, thro' the Malice of the Devil, a Want of Knowledge of yourself, or an evil Propensity puts Thoughts of *Vanity* into your Mind, and Desires of placing yourself before others, humble yourself the more for this, as it shews the little Progress you have made, and the great Difficulty of overcoming such troublesome Suggestions, a fatal Proof of a great innate Pride. This Conduct will change the *Poison* into an *Antidote*, the *Evil* into its proper *Remedy*.



C H A P. XXXIII.

Some important Instructions for such as desire to mortify their Passions and attain the Virtues requisite for them.

ALTHO' I have been very copious in pointing out the Method of subduing your Passions and acquiring the necessary Virtues, yet there still remains several Instructions to be given of equal Importance to what has been said.

1. If you desire to attain solid Virtue and an entire Command over yourself, don't, for Example, divide your Excercises of different Virtues, so as to assign them to particular Days, and thus live in a perpetual Vicissitude. The Method you ought to observe, is to apply yourself to the rooting out the most predominant Passion, and which presses most upon you at present; labouring at the same time with great Earnestness to acquire in an eminent degree the contrary Virtue. For being once possess'd of so essential a Virtue, the rest may be attain'd with little Difficulty, as but few Acts will be requisite for that End. And indeed, the Connection of one Virtue with another is so firmly cemented, that whoever entirely possesses One, possesses All.

2. Never set a precise time for acquiring any one Virtue: Never say, so many Days, Weeks, Years shall be employ'd in it: But like a fresh and vigorous Soldier who never saw the Enemy, fight

fight without ceasing, till by a compleat *Victory*, you open the Way to *Perfection*. Every Moment advance in the Road to *Heaven*, for whoever makes any Stop, so far from resting and taking Breath, is sure to lose both *Ground* and *Courage*, When I advise you to advance continually, I mean that you must never imagine yourself arrived at the height of *Perfection*; that you never omit any Opportunity of exercising new Acts of *Virtue*; and preserve a Horror of Sin even in the lightest Degree.

In order to this, you must acquit yourself of every Duty incumbent on you with the greatest *Fervor* and *Exactness*, and on all Occasions inure yourself to a perfect Practice of every *Virtue*. Embrace therefore with great Affection every Opportunity of advancing towards *Perfection* and *Sanctity*, especially such as are attended with any Difficulty; for every Effort of that Nature is of singular Efficacy for forming in a short time *virtuous Habits* in the Soul. Love those who furnish you with such Opportunities, avoiding only, with the greatest Caution, whatever may be in the least prejudicial to *Chastity*.

3. Use great *Moderation* and *Prudence* in the Practice of certain *Virtues*, whereby your *Health* may receive any Detriment, such as severe *Disciplines*, *Hair Shirts*, *Fasting*, *Watching*, long *Meditations*, and the like indiscreet *penitential Works*. For the Practice of exterior *Virtues* must not be pursued too eagerly, but step by step. Whereas all *interior Virtues*, such as the *Love of God*, a *Hatred of the World*, a *Contempt of one's self*, a *Sorrow for Sin*, *Mildness* and *Patience*, *Charity* for our *Enemies*,

as they know no Bounds, so no Precaution is necessary in their regard, and every *Act* of them ought to be practis'd in the most eminent degree possible.

4. Let the Scope off all your Designs and Endeavours be the Demolition of that *Passion* with which you are engaged, regarding such a Victory as of the greatest Consequence to you, and the most acceptable to *God*. Whether you eat or fast, whether employ'd or unemploy'd, at home or abroad, whether a contemplative or active Life take up your time, still let your Aim be the *Conquest* of that predominant *Passion*, and the *Acquisition* of the *contrary Virtue*.

5. Let the *Conveniencies* and *Pleasures* of Life in general be the Object of your Aversion, and the Attacks of *Vice* will be much enfeebled, all their Force being drawn from the Love of *Pleasures*. But if you indulge yourself in one sensual Satisfaction, while you shun another; if you make *War* only against one *Vice*, be assured, that tho' the Wounds you receive may not always be attended with the greatest Danger, yet the *Encounter* will be very sharp, and the *Victory* very doubtful. Have therefore continually before your Eyes those Words of the Holy Scripture. *He that loveth his Life, shall lose it: And he that hateth his Life in this World, doth keep it to everlasting Life.* John xii. 25. Brethren, we are *Debtors*, not to the *Flesh*, to live according to the *Flesh*. *For if you live according to the Flesh, you shall die: But if by the Spirit, you mortify the Deeds of the Flesh, you shall live.* Rom. viii. 12.

6. I shall conclude with advising what is of infinite Service, if not absolutely necessary, a *General Confession* with the requisite Dispositions, in order to secure a perfect Reconciliation with God, the Source of all *Graces*, the Giver of *Victories*, and Dispenser of *Crowns*.

C H A P. XXXIV.

That Virtues are not to be acquir'd but by degrees, and one after another.

ALTHOUGH a true Servant of Jesus Christ, who aspires to the Summit of Perfection, ought to set no Bounds to his Spiritual Advancement; nevertheless Prudence must restrain all Excesses of an inconsiderate Fervor, to which tho' every thing seems feasible at first, yet it is too apt to cool, and be intirely extinguish'd. Wherefore it must be observ'd, that besides the Method we have laid down with respect to exterior Exercises, even interior Virtues are not acquir'd but by degrees. Thus it is we are to lay the Foundations of a solid and lasting Piety, and in a little time may expect to make a considerable Progress.

For Example. In acquiring *Patience*, you must not think at first setting out, to wish for *Crosses* and to delight in them, but content yourself with the lowest Degrees of this great *Virtue*. Upon the same Principle, do not grasp at all sorts of *Virtues*, nor even many at the

same time : But pitch first upon *One*, then *Another*, if you desire such *Habits* should easily take deep root in your *Soul*. For undertaking any one particular *Virtue*, and constantly applying your *Thoughts* that Way, your *Memory* will be more exercis'd in it: Your *Understanding*, enlighten'd by the *divine Assistance*, will discover new Means and stronger Motives for attaining it: And your *Will* carried on with greater Ardor in the Pursuit: All which cannot be expected when these *three Faculties* are divided by different *Objects*.

Besides, the *Acts* requisite for forming a *Habit* of such a *Virtue*, all tending to the same *End* and mutually assisting each other, will be attended with much less Difficulty, and the latter of them will make the deeper Impression on your *Heart*, by means of the *pious Dispositions* the *former* have left.

These Reasons will still carry the greater Force with you, if you reflect that whoever strenuously engages in the Pursuit of any one *Virtue*, is insensibly advanced in the Practice of the rest, and that the attaining of *One* in an eminent Degree, must necessarily introduce a great Perfection in the *Others*, they being, like the Rays of the Sun, almost inseparably united.



C H A P. XXXV.

The most profitable means of acquiring Virtues; in what manner we are to apply ourselves to any one Virtue for a time.

TO what has been already said, I must subjoin, that in order to attain *solid Piety*, great Courage and a *Will* not to be shaken are absolutely requisite, where so many Contradictions and Difficulties are to be encounter'd. Besides, a particular Relish for *Virtue* is likewise necessary, which arises from frequently reflecting how pleasing *Virtue* is to *God*, how amiable in *itself*, how important to *Man*, and that in *it* all *Christian Perfection* begins and ends. It will be of great Moment, to purpose every Morning a strict Compliance with its Dictates in all the Occurrences of the Day, and frequently to examine how such Resolutions have been put in practice, and to form such as may be more prevalent than the first.

What is here set down regards more especially that particular *Virtue* which is the Object of our immediate Pursuit, and of which we stand most in need. To this *Virtue* must be referr'd all Reflections drawn from the Examples of the *Saints*, our Meditations on the Life and Death of our *Saviour*, which will be of infinite Service in this *Spiritual Warfare*.

Let us inure ourselves in such a manner to the Practice of Virtues, whether *interior* or *exterior*, that we find the same Ease and Satisfaction in it, as in following heretofore the Bent of our *corrupt Nature*: The Acts most contrary to which, as we have said before, are the most conducive to the establishing *habitual Virtue* in our Souls.

Select Sentences out of the Holy Scripture, and pronounced with due Attention, or resolved in the Mind, are likewise of great Efficacy. Consequently we ought to be provided with such as have any relation to the *Virtue in Question*, and employ them frequently in the Day, particularly when pressed by the predominant opposite Passion. Such as labour to attain *Mildness* and *Patience*, may repeat these or the like Passages. *Bear patiently the Wrath of God, which comes upon you in Punishment of your Sins.* Baruch iv. 25. *The Patience of the Poor shall not perish, or be deprived of its Reward.* Ps. ix. 19. *Better is the Patient than the strong Man: And he that ruleth his Mind, than the Overthrower of Cities.* Prov. xvi. 32. *In your Patience you shall possess your Souls.* Luke xxi. 19. *By Patience let us run to the Fight propos'd unto us.* Heb. xii. 1.

These or such like Aspirations may also be used. O my God, when shall I be armed with *Patience* like a Shield, proof against the Weapons of my *Enemy*? When shall I so love Thee, as to receive with Joy, all the Afflictions Thou shalt be pleas'd to appoint? O Life of my Soul, shall I never begin to live for thy

thy Glory alone, perfectly resign'd to all Sufferings? O how happy should I be, if, in the fiery Trial of Tribulation, I burnt with a Desire of being consumed for *thy Service*?

Let such Prayers be frequently offered up, as our *Devotion* suggests and our progress in *Virtue* requires. They are called *Ejaculations*, being like Darts of Fire directed to *Heaven*, lifting our Hearts thither, and piercing to the *Divine Goodness*, when accompanied with two Qualities for their Wings: The *one*, a firm Persuasion of the Delight *God* takes in seeing us labouring in the Practice of *Virtue*: the *other*, a vehement Desire of excelling in all *Virtue*, on the sole Motive of pleasing *Him*.



C H A P. XXXVI.

That the Practice of Virtue requires continual Application.

OF all Things which contribute to the acquiring of *Christian Virtues*, the Scope of our present Design, an earnest Desire of advancing continually, is of the greatest Moment, since the least Stop throws us back. The Moment we cease from forming Acts of *Virtue*, our *Inclinations*, naturally prone to Ease and the Pleasures of the Senses, raise in us disorder'd *Appetites*, which overthrow, or at least much weaken our *virtuous Habits*. To say nothing of the Loss of many *Graces* through such Neglect, which

which we might have merited by a steady Application to our spiritual Advancement.

Such is the Difference of a Journey on *Earth*, and that which tends to *Heaven*. In the former we may frequently stop, without going back, and Rest is moreover necessary to enable us to hold out to the Journey's End. But in the latter, which leads to *Perfection*, the more we advance, the more our Strength encreases. The Reason is, the *inferiour Appetites*, which throw all possible Obstacles in our Way to *Heaven*, grow weaker and weaker as we advance; and on the contrary, our *good Inclinations*, the Seat of *Virtue*, acquire new Strength.

Thus as we advance in *Piety*, the Difficulties which at first occurr'd, continually diminish, and a certain *Delight*, with which *God* is pleased to sweeten the Bitterness of this Life, encreases in Proportion. So that going chearfully on from *Virtue* to *Virtue*, we reach at last the Mountain's Top, the Height of *Perfection*, that happy State, wherein the Soul begins to practise *Virtue*, not only without Disgust, but with unspeakable Pleasure; because, triumphant as she is over her Passions, the World, and herself, she lives in *God*; and through *Him*, amidst her continual Labours, enjoys an undisturbed Tranquility.

C H A P. XXXVII.

That since we must exercise ourselves in Virtue without ceasing, all Opportunities of practising it ought to be embraced.

WE have already shewn, that in the Way to *Perfection*, we must continually advance, without making the least Stop. Watch, therefore, over yourself, that no Opportunity of acquiring any *Virtue* be ever neglected. Be careful never to avoid, as many do, what is contrary to the vitiated Affections of Nature, since it is by struggling with them, that we attain the most heroic Virtues.

Would you (to continue the same Example) attain the Virtue of *Patience*? Never avoid the Persons, the *Business*, not even the *Thoughts* from whence you have experienced much *Impatience*; but rather accustom yourself to converse with those who are most disagreeable to you. Be always willing to undergo every thing that is irksome. There is no other Method of acquiring *habitual Patience*.

If any Employment gives you Uneasiness, either from its own Nature, from those who impose it, or because it takes you from something else more agreeable to your Inclinations, be sure not to throw it up on any of these Accounts : Shew your Courage not only in cheerfully accepting of it, but in persevering, whatever

ever *Vexation* arises from it, or *Satisfaction* may be found in quitting it. Otherwise you will never learn to suffer, or enjoy that *true Peace*, which Souls, divested of all *Passions*, and adorned with every *Virtue*, find in themselves.

The same is to be said of any *Thoughts* which are very irksome. For you gain no Advantage in being entirely freed from them, because the Uneasiness they create, will inure you to bear the most vexatious Accidents. Be assured therefore, whoever teaches you a *contrary Method*, shews you indeed how to avoid the *Trouble* you dread, but not how to attain the *Virtue* you really want.

The Truth is, a new *Soldier*, who wants *Experience*, must be very discreet and cautious, sometimes in *attacking the Enemy*, at other times remaining on the *defensive*, as he finds his *Strength* and *Courage* will best bear; but must never think of turning his Back, or leaving the *Fight*, by shunning every Occasion of *Trouble* and *Vexation*. Such Behaviour indeed will remove the immediate Occasion of *Impatience*, but will leave you more than ever exposed to its *Assaults*, for want of *habitual Patience*.

What has been here alledged does not regard the Vice of *Impurity*, which, as before observed, can only be subdued by Flight.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

*That all Opportunities of engaging the Enemy
in the Acquisition of the several Virtues, particularly
those attended with the greatest Difficulty, ought to
be embraced with Joy.*

WE must not content ourselves with not avoiding Opportunities of acquiring *Virtue*: we must seek them, embrace them with great Alacrity when found, and take the most *Delight* in such as are attended with the greatest *Mortification*, they being the most *advantageous*: Nothing will appear difficult to us, with the Assistance of *Heaven*, if we imprint deep in our Hearts the following Considerations.

The first is, that such Opportunities are *proper*, not to say, *necessary* Means, for acquiring *Virtue*. Consequently, as often as we beg of *God* any particular *Virtue*, at the same Time we ask for those Means, which *He* appoints for the attaining it. Otherwise our Prayer would be frivolous, and contradictory to itself; it would be tempting *God*, who never bestows *Patience* but through *Tribulation*, nor *Humility* but through *Ignominy*.

The same is to be said of all other *Virtues*, which are the Fruits of those Trials *God* is pleased to send us, and which we ought to cherish in proportion as they are severe; because the *Violence* we use with ourselves, is of great *Efficacy* towards forming habitual *Virtues* in our Souls.

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Let us therefore be ever on our Guard to mortify our own Will, though but in a Look too curious, or a Word of too great Freedom. For though the *Victories* gained in Matters of Importance, are more *honourable*, yet those, where only Trifles are concerned, are much more frequent.

The second Consideration, which we have already touched upon, is that all things happen by *God's Appointment*, that we may advantage ourselves by them. Indeed, properly speaking, many Things, such as the *Sins* of Men, cannot be said to happen by *His Appointment*, who abhors Iniquity; nevertheless in some Sense it is true, since *He* permits them, when he has it in his Power to prevent them. But as for Afflictions, whether they befall us through our own or our Enemy's Fault, yet they certainly are appointed by *Him*, however displeasing the immediate cause may be. He expects that we bear them with Patience, either because they are the Means of our Sanctification, or for other Reasons unknown to us.

If therefore we are convinced, that to comply exactly with his *holy Will*, we must receive without murmuring those Evils which the Malice of others or our own Sins draw upon us, how much in the Wrong must all those be, who, to skreen their own Impatience, assert that *God*, as *He* is infinitely *just*, can never lay any Stress on what comes from a *bad Cause*. It is evident their only aim is to avoid Uneasiness and to persuade the World, they are in the right to reject the Crosses *God* is pleased to send. But this is not all; if the Things were indifferent on other

Accounts,

Accounts, yet *God* takes greater Delight in seeing us bear patiently any injurious Treatment, particularly from those who are under Obligations to us, than on any other Occasion of exerting our Patience. And this for the following Reasons.

The first is, because our innate *Pride* is much better curbed by the ill Usage we receive from others, than by any voluntary Mortifications we chuse for ourselves. The second is, that in suffering on such Occasions with *Patience*, we conform to what *God* requires; and contribute to his Glory, because we regulate our *Will* by *His*, in a Matter wherein his *Goodness* and *Power* are equally conspicuous, and from so vile a Thing as *Sin* itself, we gather the excellent Fruits of *Virtue* and *Saintly*.

Know then, that *God* no sooner finds us resolved to attain solid *Virtue*, than *He* sends us Trials of the severest Kind. Thus being convinced of that immense Love *He* bears us, and the Affection *He* has for our *spiritual Advance-ment*, we ought to receive with the greatest Gratitude the *Cup* *He* is pleased to offer us, and drink the last Drop of it, being well assured, that in proportion to its Bitterness, we shall find it beneficial.



C H A P. XXXIX.

How we may exercise the same Virtue on different Occasions.

IN one of the preceding Chapters it was said, that the applying ourselves for a Time to one particular *Virtue* is preferable to the embracing the Practice of too many at once, and that the particular *Virtue* we have pitched upon must be cultivated on all Occasions. We shall set down the Manner of doing this with great Facility.

It may happen on the same Day, perhaps within the same Hour, that you are severely reprimanded for some Action, in itself commendable ; that you are ill spoken of, or refused in a *harsh* Manner some small Favour ; that you are *unjustly* suspected, or employed in a *disagreeable* Affair ; that your *Dinner* is spoiled, or some *Illness* seizes you, or perhaps are overwhelmed with far *greater Evils*, of which this wretched *Life* is very fertile : In such a Combination of Vexations, doubtless there is Room for the Exercise of several *Virtues* ; but, according to the foregoing Rule, you will reap the most Benefit by applying yourself to the Practice of that *Virtue*, which you chiefly want.

If it be *Patience*, you must endeavour to bear with great Courage and Alacrity what-

ever

ever Evils may befall you. If it be *Humility*, in all your Sufferings you must remember, that they are far short of what your Sins deserve. If it be *Obedience*, resign yourself to the *Will of God*, who justly punishes you. Even for the *Love of Him*, and since it is *his Pleasure*, submit yourself not only to *rational Creatures*, but also to those who, though void of *Sense or Life*, are the Instruments of *his divine Justice*. If it be *Poverty*, be content under your Afflictions, though deprived of the Comforts and Conveniencies of Life. If it be *Charity*, exert yourself in forming Acts of the *Love of God* and your *Neighbour*, remembering that when *others* try your *Patience*, they give you an Opportunity of increasing your Merit; and that *God*, in sending or permitting the Evils which besiege you, has no other View but your spiritual Good.

What has been said of exercising the *Virtue* you pursue, in various Occurrences, points out the Method of practising it on any one particular Occasion, as in Sicknes or other Trouble whether of Body or Mind.



C H A P. XL.

What Time ought to be employed in acquiring each Virtue. The Marks of the Progress we make.

IT is impossible to prescribe in general any determinate Space of Time to be employed in acquiring each *Virtue*, as it depends

on our different States and Dispositions, the Progress we make in a devout Life, and the Direction of our spiritual Guide. But this is certain, that if the Diligence and Alacrity we have prescribed, be not wanting, in a few Weeks we shall be far advanced.

A sure Mark of considerable *Progress*, is *Perseverance in Exercises of Piety*, in spite of all Disgust, Vexations, Dryness, and the Want of all sensible Consolation. Another no less evident Mark, is when our *corrupt Inclinations*, subdued and kept under by *Reason*, are no longer capable of interrupting us in the Practice of *Virtue*. For as those decay, *Virtue* gains Strength and takes Deeper Root in our Souls. Wherefore when we feel no Repugnance on the Part of the *inferior Appetites*, we may be assured of having acquired habitual *Virtue*; and the greater the *Facility* in producing the several Acts, the more perfect is the *Habit*.

But you are not to imagine, that you are arrived to a great degree of *Sanctity*, or that your *Passions* are intirely subdued, because for a long Time and in many Trials you have not perceived any Resistance: for know, that often the *Enemy*, and our own *corrupt Nature* thus disguise themselves for a Time. And thus through a secret *Pride*, we take that for *Virtue*, which is the Effect of *Vice*. Moreover if you consider the Degree of *Perfection*, to which God calls you, whatever you may have done hitherto, you will find yourself at a great Distance from it. Persevere therefore in your usual Exercises, as if you had

had but just begun, never suffering your first Fervor to relent.

Remember that it is much better to endeavour to advance in *Virtue*, than to examine too nicely what *Progress* we have made ; because *God*, to whom alone our *Hearts* are known, discovers this Secret to *some*, while *He* hides it from *others*, as *He* knows they are susceptible of *Humility* or *Vanity* from thence ; and thus this *Father*, equally *Gracious* and *Wise*, takes from the *Weak* what might occasion their *Ruin*, and affords to *others* the Means of advancing in *Virtue*. Thus although a Soul is ignorant what *Progress* she makes, yet she must not abandon her Exercises of Devotion, since she will certainly know it when the *All-mighty* shall please, for her greater Good, to manifest it to her.



C H A P. XLI.

That we must not be too solicitous to be freed from those Evils we bear with Patience : In what Manner our Desires are to be regulated.

WHEN you are in *Affliction*, of whatever kind it be, and bear it with due *Patience*, hearken not to the *Tempter*, nor the Suggestions of *Self-love*, who stir up urgent Desires of being freed from the Trouble. For from such *Impatience* two great Evils will arise : the *one*, though you may not perhaps be intirely deprived of the *Habit* of *Patience*, yet there will remain a

Disposition to the contrary Vice; the other is, your Patience will be but imperfect, and your Recompence proportionable to the Time you exercis'd it: whereas had you desired no Relaxation, but shewed an intire Resignation to the divine Will, though your Trouble had not lasted one quarter of an Hour, God would have rewarded your Willingness to suffer for Years.

Take this therefore for a general Rule, to desire nothing but in Conformity with the Will of God; to direct all your Wishes thither, as the only Scope to which they ought to tend; thus they will be ever equitable and holy; and whatever happens, you will remain undisturbed in the Enjoyment of a perfect Tranquility. For as all Things here are appointed by Providence, if your Will be intirely conformable to it, every Thing will fall out agreeably to your Desires, because nothing can happen but according to your Will.

What is here advanced does not regard our own Sins, or those of others, because held in the utmost Detestation by the All-mighty; but only such Troubles as are the Punishment of your Crimes, or only Trials of your Virtue, though your Heart should be pierced with Grief, or even Life itself in danger. For these are the Crosses with which God favours those He loves best.

If you should endeavour to mitigate your Pain, and employ the ordinary Means for that End without Success, you must resolve to bear patiently the Evil you cannot remedy. You are even obliged to have Recourse to such Means,

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as are commendable in themselves, and appointed by *God* for such Ends; but then let this be your Motive for employing them, because *He* has so ordained, not out of any Attachment to yourself, or too eager a Desire of being freed from your Afflictions.



C H A P. XLII.

How to defend ourselves against the Artifices of the Devil, when he suggests indiscreet Devotions.

WHEN the *Devil*, that subtle *Serpent*, perceives we go courageously on towards *Heaven*, that all our Desires tend to *God* alone, and that we are Proof against his ordinary Delusions, *he* transforms himself into an *Angel of Light*; *he* urges us to attain *Perfection*, hurrying us on blindly and without the least Regard to our own Weakness; *he* fills our Heads with devout Thoughts, seconding them with Passages of the *holy Scripture*, and Examples drawn from the greatest *Saints*, in order to draw us into some shameful Step, through an indiscreet and precipitate Fervor.

For Example. *He* puts us upon chastizing our Bodies with excessive Fasting, Disciplines, and the like Mortifications. His Design is, that out of a Notion of having performed Wonders, we fall a Prey to *Vanity*, as is frequently the Case in the *weaker Sex*; or, that being dispirited with such *penitential Works* as exceed our Strength,

we may be incapable of performing any Exercises of Devotion; or, that unable any longer to undergo such severe Austerities, we may grow out of Conceit with a devout Life, and at last, being tired with the Practice of *Virtue*, return with greater Relish than ever to the *Vanities of the World*.

Who can number the Multitudes who have perished in this Manner? Presumption has blinded them so far, that, carried away with an indiscreet Zeal of suffering, they fell into the Snare they themselves helped to contrive, and became the Scorn of Devils. All which might doubtless have been prevent'd, had they consider'd, that in all such *Mortifications*, however commendable in themselves, or productive of excellent Fruit, where there is *Strength of Body* and *Humility of Mind* proportionable; in all such Mortifications, I say, as we observed before, Moderation must be observed, and a strict Regard had to our several Abilities. For every one is not capable of practising the Austerities of the *Saints*, and yet every one may imitate *them* in many things; They may form ardent and efficacious Desires of sharing in all the glorious Crowns gain'd by the faithful Soldiers of *Jesus Christ* in their *Spiritual Combats*; they may imitate the *Saints* in their *Contempt* of the *World* and *themselves*, in their *Love of Silence* and *Retirement*; in their *Humility* and *Charity* to all Men; in their patient suffering the greatest Injuries, and returning *Good for Evil* to their worst Enemies; in their Care to avoid even the smalleſt Faults; which are Things infinitely more meritorious

in the Sight of God, than all the corporal Severities we can possibly inflict on ourselves.

It must likewise be observed, that at first it is adviseable to use some Moderation in external Works of *Penance*, that there may be Room to encrease them if it should be requisite, rather than by any Excess to endanger our being incapable of performing any. I mention this, because I am willing to believe you do not give into that gross Mistake of many who make an Idol of their *Health*. These are ever in dread of being the least out of Order; and their whole Study and Conversation runs on the Means of avoiding *Sickness*. Extremely nice in point of eating; instead of strengthening, they often ruin their Stomachs by the Use of delicious Viands; and yet would make the World believe they have no other View, than to preserve themselves for *God's greater Glory*.

Thus do they veil their *Sensuality*: but the Truth is, they want to unite two irreconcileable Enemies, the *Flesh* and the *Spirit*; which can only end in the Ruin of both, as their *Health* and *Devotion* will equally suffer. Consequently those who live in a plain unaffected Way must make the greatest and surest Advances in Devotion,

But in all Things Discretion must be used, and Regard had to different *Constitutions*, which are not all equally fitted for the same *Exercises*. And this is to be understood not only of exterior *Mortifications*, but even of those *Practices* which depend intirely upon the *Mind*; as

we have shewn in treating of the Manner
of attaining by Degrees the most sublime Virtues.



C H A P. XLIII.

That our corrupt Nature, prompted by the Suggestions of the Devil, is apt to judge rashly of our Neighbour: In what manner this Evil is to be remedied.

THE good Opinion we have of ourselves, occasions another great Disorder; that is, *rash Judgment*, which we not only encourage in our own Breasts, but endeavour to infuse into others. This *Vice*, as it springs from, so it is nourished by *Pride*: and as in Proportion we give way to it, we become more conceited of ourselves, and more exposed to the *Devil's Delusions*. For by Degrees we arrogate to *ourselves* as much as we detract from *others*, foolishly imagining *ourselves* exempt from the Sins for which we so readily condemn our Neighbour.

The *Enemy* of our Souls no sooner discovers this malicious Propensity in us, but *he* immediately employs all his Artifices to make us attentive to the Failings of others, and magnify them beyond the Truth. It is not to be expressed what Pains *he* takes to make us observe the most trivial Faults in our Neighbour, when *he* cannot point out to us any Thing of Moment.

Since

Since therefore *he* is so artful and intent on our Destruction, let us be no less vigilant in discovering and defeating his Designs. When *he* suggests to us other Persons Sins, we must banish all such Thoughts, and if *he* persists in endeavouring to draw us into *rash Judgment*, we are to conceive an Abhorrence of such malicious Insinuations. Let us recollect that we are not authorised to judge others, or if we were, how seldom does *Equity* guide us, blinded as we are with *Prejudice* and *Passion*, and naturally inclined to put the worst Construction upon the *Lives* and *Actions* of others!

The most efficacious Remedy for this Evil is to be ever mindful of our own *Wretchedness*, where we shall find so much room for Amendment, as have to little Inclination to judge and condemn others. Besides, in applying ourselves to the Discovery of our own Failings, we shall easily free the Eye of our own Mind from a certain *Malignity* which is the Source of *rash Judgments*. For whoever without just grounds condemns his Neighbour, has too much reason to suspect himself guilty of the same Crime, as vicious Men are always prone to think others like themselves. When therefore we find ourselves inclined to condemn others, let us interiorly blame ourselves with this just Reproof: Blind and presumptuous Wretch, how darest thou thus rashly examine into our Neighbour's Actions, thou who hast the same, perhaps greater Sins to answer for? Thus turning these Weapons against ourselves, we may, instead

of injuring our Neighbour, remedy our own Failings,

But if the Fault be really and publickly known, let *Charity* suggest some Excuse ; let us believe there are some hidden Virtues, for the Preservation of which, *God* was pleased to permit it ; let us hope that this Failing, in which *God* suffers him to remain for a Time, may bring him to a true Sense of himself ; and that by being despis'd by others, he may learn to humble himself, and consequently be a gainer by his Fall. But where the *Sin*, besides being publick, is of an enormous Nature ; if the Sinner is harden'd in Impenitence, let us raise our Hearts to *Heaven*, and contemplate the secret Judgments of *God* ; let us consider that many, after being long buried in the worst of *Crimes*, have become great *Saints*, while others from the highest Pitch of *Perfection* have fallen into the lowest Sink of *Sin* and *Iniquity*.

These Reflexions will convince every considerate Person, that his Mistrust ought to begin at home, and that if he finds himself dispos'd to think favourably of his Neighbour, it is owing to the Inspirations of the *Holy Ghost* ; Whereas his rash Judgments, his Dislike and Contempt of others, owe their Rise to his own *Malice* and the Suggestions of the *Devil*. If therefore we ever find ourselves too attentive to the Failings of others, let us not desist till we have entirely erased them from our Memory.



C H A P. XLIV.

Of PRAYER.

IF a *Difference* of ourselves, a *Confidence* in *God*, and a right Application of the *Faculties* of our Souls, are Weapons without which we can never succeed in the *Spiritual Combat*, as has been shewn above; *prayer*, which remains to be treated of, is still far more necessary, since by it are obtained, not only those *virtues*, but every thing requisite for our Salvation. This is the Channel thro' which all *Grace* flows from above: By this is the *All-mighty* compell'd to assist us from his Throne, and destroy by our Hands, weak as they are, the fiercest of our Foes. In order to employ it with Success, the following Method must be observed.

1. We must sincerely desire to serve *God* with Fervor, and in the manner most agreeable to *Him*. This Desire will be kindled in our Breasts, if we consider three things attentively. The first is, that *God* infinitely deserves our Homage and Service by reason of the Excellence of his *Sovereign Being*, his *Goodness*, *Beauty*, *Wisdom*, *Power*, and his endless *unspeakable Perfections*. The second is, that *God* was made *Man*, and during thirty three Years laboured for our Salvation; that he condescended to dress our horrible Wounds with his own Hands, and healed them, not by pouring into them Oil and Wine, but by applying

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his

his own precious *Blood* and *immaculate Body*, torn and disfigured with cruel *Whips*, *Thorns* and *Nails*. The *third* is, how much it concerns us to observe his *Law* and discharge our *Duty*, since thro' that, and only that, we can expect to triumph over the *Devil*, to become Masters of ourselves, and the Children of *God*.

2. We must have a lively *Faith* and firm *Confidence* that God will not refuse us the Assistance necessary for serving *him* faithfully, and working out our *Salvation*. A Soul replenish'd with this holy *Confidence*, is like a sacred Vessel, into which the *divine Mercy* pours the Treasures of his *Grace*; and the more capacious this Vessel is, the greater abundance of *heavenly Blessings* will it receive thro' *Prayer*. For how can *God*, whose *Power* knows no Bounds, whose *Goodness* cannot deceive, ever refuse *his Gifts* to those whom *he* so earnestly presses to demand them, and to whom he has promis'd *his holy Spirit*, if we sue for it with *Faith* and *Perseverance*?

3. Our Motive for *Prayer* must be the *divine Will*, not *our own*; applying ourselves to this great *Duty* because *God commands it*, and desiring to be heard no farther than what is agreeable to *him*; thus our Intention will be to conform entirely our *Will* to *his*, and not to make the *divine Will* subservient to *our own*. The Reason for this is the Perversity of our own *Will*, tainted as it is with *Self-love*, which frequently knows not what it would be at; whereas the *Will* of *God*, essentially *just* and *holy*, can never be mistaken. Consequently *it* ought to be the Rule of every other *Will*, since not to follow *it*, is to

go astray. Let us be solicitous that all our Demands be agreeable to *God*; and if there is the least doubt whether they are so or not, let an entire Submission to the *divine Providence* ever accompany them. But if the things we ask, are certainly pleasing to him, such as *Grace*, *Virtue*, &c. let us beg *them* with a View of pleasing and serving *his divine Majesty*, rather than on any other Consideration, tho' never so pious.

4. If we desire our *Prayers* should be heard, our *Actions* must be suitable to our *Petitions*: we must exert ourselves both before and after *Prayer*, in rendering ourselves worthy of the Favour we ask. For *Prayer* and *interior Mortification* must be inseparable; since he that begs any particular *Virtue* without striving to put it in Practice, only tempts *God*.

5. Before we ask any thing, we ought to return most humble thanks to *God* for all the Benefits he has graciously bestow'd upon Us. We may say: *Lord*, who after creating *me*, hast mercifully paid the Price of my Redemption, and delivered me from the Fury of my Enemies times without Number, come to my Assistance, and, forgetting all my past Ingratitude, bestow on me this Favour I now ask. But if at the very time we seek to attain some one particular *Virtue*, we find ourselves tempted to the contrary *Vice*, we must thank *God* for giving us such an Opportunity of practising that *Virtue*; we ought to look upon it as a particular Favour at that Instant.

6. The whole Force and Efficacy of *Prayer*, being solely due to the *Goodness of God*, the *Merits*

of our Saviour's Life and Passion, and the *Promise* He has made graciously to hear us, we ought always to conclude our Prayers with one or more of these Sentences. I beseech Thee, O Lord, thro' thy infinite *Mercy*, grant my Petition. Thro' the *Merits* of thy Son, bestow this Favour on me. Be mindful, O my God, of thy *Promises*, and hear my Prayers. Sometimes we may also have Recourse to the Intercession of the *Blessed Virgin* and other *Saints*. For they can prevail much with God, who is pleas'd thus to honour Them, in Proportion to the Honour they piad *Him* during their Abode on Earth.

7. We must persist in this Exercise, since it is certain *God* cannot refuse to hear an humble Perseverance in Prayer. For if the *Importunity* of the *Widow* in the *Gospel* prevail'd with the wicked *Judge*, can our Prayers fail of Success with *God* who is *infinitely Good*? And thus, tho' *He* should not immediately grant what we ask, though *He* should seem not even to hear us, we must not for all this lose our Confidence in his *infinite Goodness*, nor desist from Prayer; for he possesses both an immense *Power* and *Will* to do Good to us. Consequently, if we are not wanting to ourselves, we shall infallibly obtain what we ask, or something better, and perhaps both. As for the rest, the more we think ourselves slighted, the greater ought to be our *Hatred* and *Contempt* of ourselves; but with this Condition, that the Consideration of our own *Misery* lead us to contemplate the *divine Mercy*, and far from lessening our *Confidence* in *Him*, we must encrease it

it by reflecting, that the steadier we remain in the midst of so much Cause of *Difference*, the greater will be our Merit.

In fine, let us never cease to thank God; let us equally bless his *Wisdom*, his *Goodness*, his *Charity*, whether *He* grants or refuses our Petition: Whatever happens, let us be undisturbed, contented and resigned to his *Providence* in all Things.



C H A P. XLV.

Of Mental Prayer.

Mental Prayer is the raising our Minds to God, and either *expressly* or *tacitly* asking those Things of which we stand in need.

We ask for them *expressly* when we say in our Hearts: O my God, grant me this Favour for the Honour of thy *Holy Name*: Or, Lord, I am firmly convinced that it is thy *Will*, and for thy greater *Honour*, that I ask this Blessing; accomplish therefore now thy *divine Will* in me. When hard-pressed by the Attacks of our *Enemies*, we may say: Haste, O Lord, to my Assistance, lest I fall a Prey to my *Enemies*: Or, My God, my Refuge and all my Strength, help me speedily, lest I perish. If the *Temptation* continues, we must likewise continue the same Prayer, courageously resisting the *Fiend*. When the Fury of the *Combat* is passed, let us address ourselves to the *All-mighty*, begging *Him* to con-

sider on one Side the Strength of the *Enemy*, and on the other our Weakness, saying : Behold here, O my *God*, thy Creature, the Work of thy *Hands*; behold a Man redeem'd with thy precious *Blood*. See the *Devil* endeavouring to carry him from *Thee*, and utterly destroy him. It is to *Thee* I fly for Succour, in *Thee* I place all my Confidence, because I know *Thou* art infinitely good and infinitely powerful. Have Pity on a blind Wretch, tho' wilfully so, who without the Assistance of thy Grace must inevitably fall a Prey to his Enemies. Help me therefore, O my only Hope, O sole Strength of my Soul.

We tacitly ask Favours of *God*, when we lay before Him our Necessities, without making any particular Request. Placing ourselves therefore in his Presence, and acknowledging that of ourselves we are unable to avoid *Evil* or do *Good*, yet inflamed with a Desire of serving *Him*, we must fix our Eyes on *Him*, waiting for his Assistance with great Confidence and Humility. This Confession of our Weakness, this Desire to serve *Him*, this Act of Faith thus perform'd, is a silent Prayer, which will infallibly obtain of *Heaven* what we wish, and will carry the greater Force, as the Confession is the more sincere, the Desire the more ardent, and the Faith the more lively. There is another Manner of Prayer of this Sort, but more concise, which consists in one Act of the Soul, laying before the Almighty her Wants, that is, calling to Mind a Favour which has been already ask'd, and is still besought without expressing it.

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Let us endeavour to practise this Kind of Prayer, and learn to employ it on all Occasions; for Experience will convince us, that as nothing is more easy, so nothing is more excellent and efficacious.



C H A P. XLVI.

Of M E D I T A T I O N.

WHEN a longer Time is to be employ'd in Prayer, as half an Hour, an Hour, or even more, it is adviseable to form a Meditation on some Point of our Saviour's Life or Passion, and applying the Reflexions naturally arising from thence, to that particular Virtue we are endeavouring to attain.

If you stand in need of *Patience*, contemplate the Mystery of your *Saviour* scourged at the Pillar. Think 1. How the *Soldiers*, being order'd to bring *Him* to the Place appointed, dragg'd *Him* thither with loud Cries and bitter Scoffs. 2. How being stript of his Garments *He* was expos'd to piercing Cold. 3. How his innocent *Hands* were bound tight to the Pillar. 4. How his *Body* was torn with Whips till the *Blood* flow'd in Streams to the Ground. 5. How the Strokes being often repeated on the same Part, encreas'd and renew'd his *Wounds*,

While you dwell on these, or the like Particulars, proper to inspire you with the Love of *Patience*, endeavour to feel interiorly in the most lively

lively Manner, the inexpressible Anguish your divine Master endured all over his Body. From thence pass to the cruel Pangs his blessed Soul endured, and endeavour to conceive the Patience and Mildness with which He suffer'd, ever ready to undergo even more for his Father's Glory and your Good,

After this behold Him cover'd with Blood, and be assured that He desires nothing more earnestly than that you may bear your Affliction with Patience, and that He implores his Heavenly Father's Assistance for enabling you to bear with Resignation not only this Cross, but all others for the future, Strengthen with repeated Acts the Resolution you have taken of suffering with Joy ? then raising your Mind to Heaven, give Thanks to the Father of Mercies, who vouchsafed to send his only Son into the World, to suffer such horrible Torments, and to intercede for you. Conclude with beseeching Him to give you the Virtue of Patience thro' the Merits and Intercession of this beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.



C H A P. XLVII.

Another Method of Prayer, by way of Meditation.

TH E R E is another Method of *Prayer* and *Meditation*, as follows. After having consider'd with great Attention the Pains your Saviour felt, and his Clearfulness in suffering, you may

may proceed to two other Considerations of equal Moment.

The one is, the Contemplation of his infinite Merits: The other, of that Satisfaction and Glory which the eternal Father receiv'd from his Obedience, even to Death, even the Death of the Cross.

You must represent these two Considerations to the divine Majesty, as two powerful Means of obtaining the Grace you ask. This Method is applicable not only to all the Mysteries of our Saviour's Passion, but to every Act, whether interior or exterior, he form'd in each Mystery.



C H A P. XLVIII.

A Method of Prayer grounded on the Intercession of our Blessed Lady.

BEIDES the Methods of Meditation already mention'd, there is another which is address'd particularly to the *Blessed Virgin*. First represent to yourself the eternal Father, then Jesus Christ our Lord, and lastly his ever-blessed Mother.

With regard to the eternal Father, you are to consider two Things. The first is that singular Affection He had from all Eternity for this most chaste Virgin, even before he had drawn her out of nothing. The second is, that eminent Sanctity He was pleased to bestow on her, and all the Virtues she practised during her whole Life.

Concerning

Concerning the first; you must begin with raising your mind above all created Beings; anticipate all Time; launch into the vast Expanses of *Eternity*, enter into the Heart of God, and see with what Delight He view'd in Futurety the Person appointed to be Mother of his Son; beseech *Him* by that Delight to give you Sufficient Strength against your Enemies, especially those who press hardest upon you. Then contemplate the *Virtues* and *heroic Actions* of this incomparable *Virgin*; make an Offering of them all, or of each one singly to *God*, making a Merit of them towards obtaining of the *divine Goodness* whatever your Necessities may require.

After this, address yourself to *Jesus*, and beg of *Him* to be mindful of that amiable *Mother*, who for nine Months carried *Him* in her Womb, and from the first Instant of his Birth paid him the most profound Adoration, in Acknowledgment of his being at once *God* and *Man*, her *Creator* and *Son*; who with great Compassion saw *Him* poorly accommodated in a Stable, nourish'd *Him* with her pure Milk, kiss'd and embraced *Him* a thousand Times with maternal Fondness, and thro' his whole Life and at his Death suffer'd for *Him* beyond Expression. Lay all this so strongly before *Him*, that *He* may be compell'd, as it were, by such powerful Motives to hear your Prayers.

Lastly applying to the *Blessed Virgin* herself, say, that Providence design'd her from all Eternity to be the *Mother of Mercy* and *Refuge of Sinners*; and consequently that after her *divine Son*, you place your greatest Confidence in her *Inten-*
ceffion.

effion. Represent to her what so many learned Men have asserted, and what has been confirmed by so many miraculous Events, that no one ever called upon *her* with a lively Faith, without experiencing her Assistance. In fine represent to *her* the Sufferings of her Son for your Salvation, that *she* may obtain of *Him* the Grace necessary for making a right Use of it to the greater Glory of that amiable Saviour.



C H A P. XLIX.

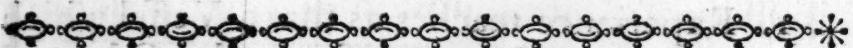
Some Considerations to induce Sinners to confide in the Assistance of the Blessed Virgin.

WHoever is desirous to have Recourse to the *Blessed Virgin* with due Confidence, must attend to the following Motives.

1. Experience teaches us that a Vessel which has contain'd *Perfumes*, preserves the Odour of them, especially if it was for any considerable Time, or if any still remain in it; yet they have but a limited Force, no more than *Fire*, whose Warmth is retain'd after removing from it. If so, what shall we say of the *Charity* and *Compassion* of the *Blessed Virgin*, who for nine Months bore, and still carries in her Heart the *Only Son of God*, the *increated Charity* which knows no Bounds? If, as often as we approach a great *Fire*, we are affected by its Heat, does it not follow, and have we not great Reason to believe, that whoever approaches *Mary*, that Mother

ther of *Mercies*, that *Heart* ever burning with the most ardent *Charity*, must be the more affected, the oftener He addresses himself to her, and the greater his *Reliance* and *Humility* is ?

2. No created Being ever bore such ardent Love to *Jesus Christ*, nor shew'd so perfect a Submission to His *Will*, as His *blessed Mother*. If therefore this *divine Saviour*, who gave himself a *Sacrifice* for us wretched Sinners : if, I say, this *Saviour* has appointed his *own Mother* to be *Mother* to us all, our *Advocate*, and *Intercessor* to *Him*; She cannot but comply with his *Appointment*, and will never refuse us her Assistance. Let us not hesitate to implore her *Pity*; let us have recourse to her with great Confidence in all our Necessities, she being an inexhaustible Source of Blessings, and ever proportions her *Favours* to the *Confidence* placed in her.



C H A P. L.

A Method of Meditation and Prayer, through the Intercession of the Saints and Angels.

IN order to obtain the Protection of the *Saints* and *Angels*, the two following Methods may be employed.

The first is, to address yourself to the *eternal Father*; and lay before *Him* the divine Hymns of the *heavenly Choirs*, the Labours, the Persecutions, the Torments undergone by the *Saints* while

while on Earth for the Love of *Him*; and then by all these Marks of their *Respect*, their *Fidelity*, their *Love*, conjure *Him* to grant your Petitions.

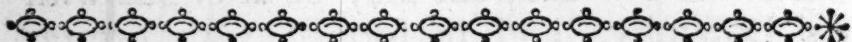
The second is, to call upon those *blessed Spirits*, who earnestly desire not only that we may attain their *Perfection* here, but even greater *Glory* hereafter. Beg therefore earnestly, that *they* would assist you in subduing your evil Inclinations and overthrowing the *Enemies* of your Salvation, but particularly to be mindful of you in the Hour of *Death*. Sometimes revolve in your Mind the extraordinary Graces *they* receive from the *All-mighty*, and rejoice as if they had been bestowed on yourself. Nay, your *Joy* may be greater for *His* having rather bestowed such Favours on *them* than on yourself, because *such was His divine Will*; for which you ought to bless and praise *His holy Name*.

But that this Exercise may be attended with less Difficulty, and performed with greater Regularity, it will be proper to assign the several Days of the Week, to the different Orders of the *Blessed*. On *Sunday*, beg the Intercession of the nine Choirs of *Angels*; on *Monday*, invoke *St. John Baptist*; on *Tuesday*, the *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*: on *Wednesday*, the *Apostles*; on *Thursday*, the *Martyrs*; on *Friday*, the *Bishops* and *Confessors*: on *Saturday*, the *Virgins* and other *Saints*. But let no Day pass without imploring the Assistance of our *blessed Lady*, the Queen of all *Saints*, without invoking your *Angel Guardian*, the glorious Archangel *St. Michael*, or any other *Saint*, to whom you have any particular Devotion.

N

Moreover,

Moreover, daily beseech the *eternal Father, Jesus Christ, and the blessed Virgin*, that you may be particularly under the Protection of Saint Joseph, the worthy Spouse of the chastest of Virgins. Then addressing yourself to him, ask with great Humility, to be received into his Protection. Numberless are the Instances related of this Saint's wonderful Assistance afforded to those who have called upon him in their Necessities, whether spiritual or corporal ; and chiefly when they have stood in Need of Light from Heaven, and an invisible Director in their Prayers. And if God shews so much Regard to other Saints, on Account of their having loved and served *Him* here ; what Consideration and Deference will He not manifest for the Person He honoured so highly on Earth, as to be subject to, and obey as a Father ;



C H A P. LI.

Of Meditation on the Sufferings of Christ, and the affecting Sentiments to be drawn from thence.

WHAT I before laid down concerning the Method of *Praying* and *Meditating* on the Sufferings of our Lord and Saviour, regarding only the asking for that we stand in need of ; we are now to proceed to the forming from thence various affecting Sentiments. If therefore, for Example, you have chose for the Subject of your Meditation the *Crucifixion* of

of the *Man-God*, among other Circumstances of that Mystery, you may dwell on these which follow.

Consider, 1. That *Jesus* being arrived on *Mount Calvary*, the Executioners rudely strip'd *Him*, tearing off the Skin with the Cloaths, to which his Wounds and congealed Blood had now closely cemented it. 2. That taking off his *Crown of Thorns*, and setting it on again in Derision, his *sacred Head* was pierced in fresh Places. 3. That He was fastened to the Cross with large Nails drove by heavy hammers. 4. That his Hands not reaching to the Places designed for them, they were stretch'd so violently, that all his Bones were disjointed, and might easily be counted. *Psalms xxi. 18.* 5. That being elevated on the Cross, the whole Weight of his Body rested on the Nails which tore the Wounds of his *Hands* and *Feet* wider, and gave *Him* most exquisite Pain.

If by these and the like Considerations you are desirous of kindling in your Breast the Flames of *divine Love*, endeavour to attain by *Meditation* a sublime Knowledge of your *Saviour's* infinite Goodness, who, for your Sake, condescended to suffer so much. For the more you advance in the Knowledge of his *Love* for you, the greater will be your *Love* and *Affection* for *Him*. Being thus convinced of his exceeding great Charity, you will naturally conceive a sincere Sorrow for having so often and so heinously offended *Him*, who offered Himself a Sacrifice for your offences.

From thence proceed to form *Acts of Hope*, from the Consideration, that this great God had no other Design on the Cross than to extirpate *Sin* out of the World, to free you from the *Tyranny* of the *Devil*, to expiate your *Crimes*, to reconcile you to his *Father*, and provide a *Resource* for you in all your Necessities. But if after contemplating his *Passion*, you consider its Effects; if you observe, that by his *Death* the *Sins* of Men were blotted out, the Anger of a *sovereign Judge* appeas'd, the Powers of *Hell* defeated, *Death* itself vanquish'd, the Places of the fallen *Angels* filled up in *Heaven*, your *Grief* will be changed into *Joy*; and this *Joy* will encrease by reflecting on the *Joy* which the *holy Trinity*, the *blessed Virgin*, the *Church Militant* and *Triumphant* receive from the accomplishing of the great Work of the *Redemption of Mankind*.

If you would conceive a lively *Sorrow* for your *Sins*, let your *Meditation* tend no farther than to convince you, that if *Jesus Christ* suffered so much, it was to inspire you with a wholesome *Hatred* of yourself and your *disorderly Passions*, particularly of that which occasions your greatest Failings, and consequently most offensive to *All-mighty God*.

If you would excite Sentiments of *Admiration*, you need only consider, that nothing can be so surprising as to see the *Creator* of the *Universe*, the *Fountain of Life*, butcher'd by his own *Creatures*; to see the *supreme Majesty* as it were annihilated, *Justice* condemn'd, *Beauty* itself defiled and lost under *Filth*, the *Object* of the

the eternal Father's Love become the Hatred of Sinners, Light inaccessible overwhelm'd by the Powers of Darkness, increased Glory and Felicity buried under Ignominy and Wretchedness.

To excite *Compassion* in your Breast for the Sufferings of your *Saviour* and your *God*, besides his *exterior Pains*, consider those *interior ones* which far exceeded the others. For if you are moved with the *former*, your Heart will be pierced with Grief at the Sight of the *latter*. The *Soul of Christ* beheld the *Divinity* at that Instant as clearly as it does now in *Heaven*: It knew how much *God* deserved to be honoured; and as it infinitely loved *Him*, it likewise earnestly desired that all *his* Creatures should love *Him* with all their Force. Seeing *Him* therefore so horribly dishonoured throughout the World by numberless abominable Crimes, it was overwhelmed with a *Grief* answerable to its *Love and Desire*, that the *divine Majesty* should be loved and served by all Men. As the Greatness of this *Love and Desire* was beyond Imagination, it is in vain to endeavour to comprehend the Excesses of those *interior Pains* which *Christ* endured in the Agonies of Death.

Besides, as this *divine Saviour* loved *Mankind* beyond any Thing that can be express'd, such a tender and ardent Affection must have created an extreme Affliction for those Sins which would tear them from *Him*. He knew that no one could commit a mortal Sin, without destroying that *Charity* and *sanctifying Grace*, which is the spiritual Bond of Union between *Him* and the *Just*. And this Separation would cause

greater Anguish to the *Soul* of *Jesus*, than the Dislocation of his Limbs was to his Body. For the *Soul* being altogether spiritual, and of a Nature far more perfect than the *Body*, of Consequence must be more exquisitely capable of Pain. But doubtless the most grievous Affliction our *blessed Saviour* underwent, was, the View of the Sins of the *Damned*, who being incapable of repenting, must be banished from *Him* for all *Eternity*.

If the Contemplation of so many Sufferings moves you to Compassion for your dying *Jesus*, go on, and you will find that He suffered excessively, not only from the Sins you have actually committed, but even on Account of those you have *not* committed, since the last Drop of his *precious Blood* was poured out both to wash away the *former* and preserve you from the latter. Trust me, you can never want Motives for taking Part in the Sufferings of *Jesus crucified*. Know moreover, that there never was, nor ever will be in any *rational Creature*, that Affliction which He hath not experienced: *Injuries, Reproaches, Temptations, Pains, Loss of Goods, voluntary Austerities*, and this more exquisitely than those who actually groan under them. For as this *tender Parent* has a perfect Comprehension of whatever we are liable to suffer, whether in Body or Mind, even to the least Pain or Head-ach, *He* must certainly have been moved with great Compassion for us.

But who can express what *He* felt at the Sight of his *blessed Mother's* Affliction? *She* shared in all the Pangs and Outrages with which *his Passion*

tion was attended, and this with the same Views and from the same Motives ; and though *her* Sufferings were infinitely short of *His*, yet were they beyond Expression. This redoubled all the Sorrows of *Jesus*, and pierced *his* Heart still deeper. Hence it was that a certain devout Soul compared the Heart of *Jesus* to a burning Furnace, in which *He* voluntarily suffered from the ardent Flames of *divine Love*.

And, after all, what is the Cause of such unspeakable Torments? No other than *our Sins*: and therefore the greatest Compassion and Gratitude we can possibly shew towards *Him* who has suffered so much for us, is to be truly sorry for our past Offences, and this purely for the Love of *Him*; to detest *Sin* beyond all Things, because displeasing to *Him*; to wage continual War against our *evil Inclinations*, as *His* greatest *Enemies*; that thus divesting ourselves of the *old Man*, and putting on the *new*, we may adorn our Souls with *Virtue*, in which alone their Beauty consists.

C H A P. LII.

Of the Fruits arising from Meditations on the Cross, and the Imitation of the Virtues of Christ Crucified.

GREAT are the Advantages which may be reap'd from meditating on the *Cross*. The first is, not only a Detestation of *past* Sins, but a firm Resolution to fight against our disorderly Appetites, which crucified our *Saviour*, and are not as yet extinguished in us. The second is, the obtaining of *Jesus crucified* the Forgiveness of Sins committed, and the Grace of a wholesome Hatred of ourselves, so as never to offend *Him* more, but to love and serve *Him* with our whole Hearts for the future, in Acknowledgement of what *He* suffered for our Sakes. The third is, to labour without ceasing in rooting out all depraved Habits, however trivial they may appear. The fourth is, to exert ourselves in imitating the Virtues of this *divine Master*, who died not only to expiate our Sins, but to set us the Example of a Life of Sanctity and Perfection,

The following Method of *Meditation* will be highly serviceable. In the Supposition, that you desire to imitate the *Patience*, among other Virtues of your *Saviour*, in bearing the Crosses which befal you, weigh well these several Points.

1. What

1. What the Soul of Jesus did on the Cross for God.
2. What God did for the Soul of Jesus.
3. What the Soul of Jesus did for itself and its Body.
4. What Jesus did for us.
5. What we ought to do for Jesus.

1. Consider in the first Place, that the Soul of Jesus, swallowed up in the Ocean of the Divinity, contemplated that infinite and incomprehensible Being, before whom all Creatures, even the most exalted, are a mere Nothing; contemplated, I say in a State, wherein, without the least Diminution of its essential Glory and Splendor, it debases itself so far as to suffer all sorts of Indignities from vile ungrateful Man; and then adored its sovereign Majesty; giving it millions of Thanks, and accepting of every Thing for its Service.

2. Behold on the other Hand what God did in regard of the Soul of Jesus; consider that his Will was, that this only Son, so dear to Him, should for the Love of us be buffeted, spit upon, blasphemed, torn with Whips, crown'd with Thorns, and nailed to a Cross. See with what Delight He beholds him loaded with Infamy and overwhelm'd with Affliction for so deserving an End!

3. Contemplate after this the Soul of Jesus, and observe, that, knowing the Pleasure God took in seeing it suffer, for the Love it bears the Divinity, either on Account of his immense Perfections, or the infinite Favours receiv'd, it submitted itself to his Will in all things with the greatest Alacrity. Who can describe its ardent Affection for Crosses? It sought even new ways of suffering, but failing in this, it abandon'd itself and

and the innocent *Body* to the Mercy of Miscreants and the Powers of Hell.

4. Then turn your Eyes to *Jesus*, who in the midst of most cruel Torments, thus addresseth himself to you in the most affectionate Manner: See to what Excess of Misery I am reduced by thy ungovernable *Will*, which refuseth the least Constraint in compliance with mine. See the horrible Pains I endure, with no other View but to teach thee a Lesson of *Patience*. Let me conjure thee, by all these Sufferings, to accept with Resignation this *Cross* I here present, and all those I shall send thee hereafter. Give up thy Reputation to Calumny, thy Body to the Fury of such Persecutors as I shall chuse for thy Trial, however vile and inhuman they may be. O that thou didst know what Delight thy Patience and Resignation afford me! But how canst thou be ignorant of it, when thou beholdest these Wounds I have receiv'd, to purchase for thee, at the Price of my *Blood*, those Virtues, with which I would willingly adorn thy Soul, more dear to me than Life itself? If I have suffered myself to be reduced to this Extremity for thy Sake, canst not thou bear a slight Affection, in order to mitigate a little the Excess of *mine*? Canst thou refuse to heal those Wounds I have receiv'd thro' thy Impatience, more cruel to me than the Pangs I suffer?

5. Consider who it is that speaks thus to you, and you will find that it is *Jesus Christ*, the King of Glory, true *God* and true *Man*, Consider the Greatness of his Torments and Humiliations,

beyond

beyond what the worst of Criminals deserve. Be astonish'd to behold *Him* in the midst of these Agonies not only fix'd and resolute, but even replenish'd with Joy, as if the Day of his *Passion* was a Day of *Triumph*. Think, that as a few Drops of Water sprinkled upon a Furnace, only add a fresh Fierceness to it; so his Torments, which to his Charity appeared light, served but to encrease his Joy and Desire of suffering still greater.

Moreover, reflect that All *He* did and suffered, was neither through Constraint nor Interest, but from a Motive of the most pure Love, as *He* has declared, and in order to teach you how to practise *Patience*. Endeavour therefore to attain a perfect Knowledge of what *He* demands of you, and the Delight *He* takes in seeing you put in Practice this *Virtue*: then from an ardent Desire of carrying the *Cross*, under which you labour, notonly with *Patience*, but with *Joy*, and even others far heavier, that you may more exactly imitate *Christ crucified*, and render yourself the more acceptable to *Him*.

Represent to yourself all the Torments and Ignominies of his *Passion*, and, astonish'd at the Constancy *He* shews, blush at your own Weakness: look upon your own Sufferings, when compared with *his*, as merely imaginary, and be convinced that your *Patience* is not even the Shadow of *his*. Dread nothing so much as an *Unwillingness* to suffer for your *Saviour*, and if such a Thought but present itself, reject it as a Suggestion from *Hell*.

Consider *Jesus* on the *Cross* as a *devout Book*, which you ought to study without ceasing, to learn

learn the Practice of the most *heroic Virtues*. This is the Book which may be truly called the *Book of Life*: Revel. iii. 5. Which at once *enlightens* the Mind by its *Doctrines*, and *inflames* the Will by its Examples. The World is full of Books; but were it possible for a Man to read them all, he would never be so well instructed to hate *Vice* and embrace *Virtue*, as by contemplating a *crucified God*. But remember, that such as spend whole Hours in bewailing the *Passion* of our *Lord*, and admiring his *Patience*, yet on the first Occasion betray as great an Impatience of suffering, as if they had never thought on the *Cross*; such, I say, are like raw Soldiers, who in their Tents breathe nothing but Conquests, but on the first Appearance of the *Enemy*, shamefully run away. What is there more despicable than after considering, admiring and extolling the Virtues of our *Redeemer*, in an Instant to neglect and forget them all, when an Opportunity offers of putting them in Practice?



C H A P. LIII.

Of the EUCHARIST.

THUS far I have endeavoured, as you may have observed, to furnish you with four Sorts of *spiritual Weapons*, and teach you the Method of employing them: it remains to lay before you the great Succour you may draw

draw from the most holy Eucharist, for subduing the *Enemies* of your *Perfection* and *Salvation*. As this *August Sacrament* surpasses in Dignity and Efficacy all the rest, it is also the most terrible of all Weapons to the *infernal Powers*. The four we have already treated of, have no Force but through the *Merits* of *Jesus Christ*, and by the *Grace* *He* has acquired for us with his *precious Blood*; but this contains *Jesus Christ* himself, his *Body*, his *Blood*, his *Soul* and *Divinity*. Those are bestowed upon us by *God*, that we may with them subdue our *Enemies*, through *Jesus Christ*, but this is given us that we may fight against them with *Him*; because by eating his *Body* and drinking his *Blood*, we dwell with *Him*, and *He* in us. But, as we may eat this *Body*, and drink this *Blood*, two different Ways, in *reality* every Day, and *spiritually* every Hour, both highly profitable and holy; the *latter* ought to be practised as often as possible, the *former* as often as shall be judged expedient.



C H A P. LIV.

In what Manner we ought to receive the blessed Sacrament.

THE Motives for approaching this *divine Sacrament* are many. From thence it comes, that several Particulars are to be observed at three different Times, viz. *before Communion*, *at Communion*, and *after Communion*.

O

Before

Before Communion, whatever the Motive be, we must never fail of cleansing our Souls by the Sacrament of *Penance*, if defiled with the Guilt of *mortal Sin*. After this we are to offer ourselves with all Sincerity to *Jesus Christ*, and consecrate our Souls with all their Faculties to his Service, since in this Sacrament *He* bestows on us *Himself* entire, his *Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity*, accompanied with the immense Treasure of his *infinite Merits*. And as all we can present to *Him* is nothing in Comparison with what *He* gives us, we must wish to be possessed of all the Merits which the created Beings of the *Universe* could ever offer, that the Present might deserve the regard of an *infinite Majesty*.

If our Design be to obtain some *Victory* over our *spiritual Enemies*, let us for some Days before communion meditate on the *ardent Desire* our *blessed Saviour* has of entering into our Breasts by this *Sacrament*, that *He* may be united to us, and assist us in subduing our disorderly Appetites. The Ardeney of this Desire is infinitely beyond our Comprehension,

In order to form some Idea of it, let us endeavour to comprehend two Things. The one is, the unspeakable Pleasure which the *Wisdom incarnate* takes in *dwelling among us*, calling it *his Delight*, Prov. viii. 3. The other is, the infinite Hatred He bears to *mortal Sin*, both as it is an insuperable *Obstacle* to that intimate Union *He* so much seeks with us, and as it is *destructive*, as far as in it lies, of the *divine Attributes*. For as *God* is sovereign *Good*, a pure *Light*, a

Beauty

Beauty without Spot, He must necessarily abhor Sin, which is all Malice, all Darkness, all Filth and Corruption. So great is his Abhorrence; that all *He* has done in both the old and new Testaments, all that his *Son* suffered in his *Life* and *Passion*, all tended only to the Destruction of it. Several great *Saints* have not doubted to assert, that *He* would consent his *Son*, dear as *He* is, should suffer a thousand Deaths, were it necessary, for the Expiation of the least of our Faults.

From these two Considerations having gathered, tho' very imperfectly, how much our *Saviour* desires to enter our Hearts, that *He* may entirely exterminate for ever his and our *Enemies* from thence, we ought to conceive and shew a most ardent Impatience for his Reception, The Hopes of his Arrival will raise our Courage, and inspire us to declare War anew against the predominant *Passion* we struggle with, forming as many Acts as possible of the contrary Virtue; and this particularly on the Evening and Morning before Communion.

When we are on the point of receiving the *Body* of our *Lord*, let us for a Moment take a Review of all the Faults we have committed since our last Communion; and in order to conceive a true Sorrow, let us Reflect that we committed them with as little Remorse as if *God* had not died upon a *Cross* for us; this must cover us with Confusion, and strike a Terror for having basely preferr'd a trifling Compliance with our own Will, to the Obedience due to so gracious a *Master*. But when we consider, that notwithstanding

Standing our Ingratitude and Infidelity, this God of all *Charity* still condescends to bestow Himself upon us, to invite us to receive *Him*, let us then approach *Him* with great Confidence, opening our Hearts that He may enter and take Possession of them; after this let us shut them close, that no unclean Affection may creep in.

After Communion we are to remain in a profound Recollection, adoring our *Lord* with great Humility, and saying in our Hearts: Thou seest, O *God* of my Soul, my wretched Propensity to Sin: Thou seest how this *Passion* domineers over me, and that of myself I cannot resist it. 'Tis *Thou* must fight my Battles, and, if I have any Share in the *Combat*, 'tis from *Thee* alone that I must hope for Victory. Then addressing ourselves to the *Eternal Father*, let us offer to Him this *beloved Son* now bestowed upon, and dwelling within us; let us offer *Him* in Thanks for so many Benefits received, and in order to obtain thro' his Assistance a compleat Victory over ourselves. In fine, let us form a Resolution of fighting courageously against that particular *Enemy*, from whom we suffer most; and we may expect to conquer, since, if we are not wanting on our Part, *God* sooner or later will certainly crown our Endeavours with Success.



C H A P. LV.

*The Manner of preparing for Communion, in order
to excite ourselves to the Love of God.*

IF our Motive for Communion be a Desire of increasing the *Love of God* in us, we must call to mind the *Love* which *God* bears to us. The Preparation consists in considering with great Attention, that this *Sovereign Lord*, whose *Power* and *Majesty* are without Bounds, was not satisfied with creating us according to his own *Image* and *Likeness*, nor with sending his only *Son* to expiate our Sins by a laborious *Life* of upwards of thirty Years, and a Death on the *Cross* no less cruel than ignominious; but also has left *Him* to us in this *Sacrament*, to be our Food and Support in all our *Necessities*. Weigh well the *Greatness* and *Singularity* of this *Love* in the following Manner:

1. As to its Duration, we shall find that it is *eternal*, and never had a Beginning. For as *God* is from all *Eternity*, so long hath *He* loved *Man*, even to the bestowing his *Son* upon him in this incomprehensible Manner. Say therefore, in a Transport of Joy; True it is, that such a despicable Creature as I am, have been so much esteem'd and belov'd of *God*, that *He* was pleas'd to think of me from all *Eternity*, designed the *Body* and *Blood* of his only *Son* for my Food and Nourishment.

2. Our strongest Passions for earthly Things are circumscribed by certain Limits, which they cannot exceed. The *Love* alone which God bears us knows no Bounds. To fulfill it, *He* sent his *Son*, equal to *Himself* in *Substance* and *Perfections*. Thus is the *Gift* equal to his *Love*, and his *Love* to the *Gift*; both *infinite*, and beyond the Reach of all created Understandings.

3. In thus loving us, *God* was not under the least Constraint, but only influenceed by the Excess of his *Love*, naturally tending to heap Benefits on us.

4. We had not performed the least good Action, or acquired the least Merit towards deserving his *Love*; and if *He* has loved us to this excess, if *He* has given *Himself* entirely to us, it is all owing to his *immense Charity*.

5. His *Love* for us is most pure, and, as may be observed, no ways blended with Views of interest like the Friendships of this World. What is all we are worth to *Him*, who in *Himself*, independantly of us, possesses the Source of all *Happiness* and *Glory*? When therefore *He* showers his *Blessings* upon us, *He* has no other View but our Advantage. With this Thought, let each one say in himself: Who could have imagined, O *Lord*, that a *God*, infinitely great, should place his Affections on so vile and abject a Creature as myself? What could be thy Design, O *King* of *Glory*? What couldst thou expect from *Dust* and *Ashes*? That ardent *Charity* in which Thou art encircled, that *Fire* which at once enlight-

ens

ens and enflames me, convinces me that Thou hadst but that one Design, and consequently that thy *Love* is void of all Interest: Thy Design in giving *Thyself* entire to me in this *Sacrament*, is to transform me into *Thee*, that I may live in *Thee*, and *Thou* in me; and that by so intimate an Union I may become one with *Thee*, and change an earthly Heart, such as mine, into a Heart entirely *spiritual* and *divine*, as *Thine* is.

After this, let us enter into Sentiments of *Joy* and *Admiration* at the Marks the *Son of God* gives us of his Esteem and Love; and being convinced, that his only Aim is to win our Hearts entirely over to *Him*, by weaning us from Creatures and attaching us to *Himself*, let us offer ourselves as an *Holocaust*, that our *Will*, *Memory*, and *Understanding* may be no longer influenced by any other Principle than a *Love* and *Desire* of pleasing *Him*.

Then reflecting, that without his *Grace* we are utterly incapable of being properly disposed for receiving the *holy Eucharist*, let us lay open our Hearts to obtain it, employing short but ardent Ejaculations, like the following Aspirations: **O heavenly Food!** when shall I be united to *Thee*, and be happily consumed in the Fire of *divine Love*? When shall I, **O divine Charity!** **O living Bread!** when shall I live only in *Thee*, by *Thee*, and for *Thee* alone? **O heavenly Manna!** **O my Life!** **O Life of eternal Happiness!** when shall I see the Day, that, disgusted with all this World affords, I shall seek my Nourishment from *Thee* alone?

O sovereign

O sovereign Good ! O only Joy of my Heart ! when will the happy Time come ? Disengage, O my God, from this Moment, disengage my Heart from the Slavery of its Passions and Vices ; adorn it with thy heavenly Virtues ; stifle all Desire in it, but that of loving and pleasing Thee. Then will I lay it open, and beg Thou wilt please to enter it ; and to prevail, I will, if necessary, employ even an affectionate Violence. Thither shalt Thou come, O my only Treasure, and nothing shall prevent thy Presence from producing its desired Effects. Such are the tender and affectionate Sentiments which ought to be formed, especially on the Evening and Morning before Communion.

When the Time draws near, we are to consider attentively who we are going to receive. No less than the Son of the living God ; the august Majesty, before whom the Heavens, and the Powers of the Heavens shake for Fear ; the Saint of Saints, the Mirror without Spot, Purity itself, before whom every Thing is unclean : it is this God humbled, who, though the dread Arbiter of Life and Death, was pleased for Man's Salvation to become like a Worm of the Earth, the Derision of a Mob, to be rejected with Scorn, mocked, trampled upon, defiled with Spittle, and fasten'd to a Cross by a factious Party of Worldlings. On the other Side consider, that of yourself you are nothing ; that your Sins have reduced you below the vilest of Creatures, even Brutes themselves ; in a Word, you have deserved to become a Slave to Devils. Reflect, that instead

stead of shewing your Gratitude for infinite Favours received, you have barbarously insulted your *Redeemer*, have even trampled upon his *Blood*, shed for you as the Price of your Redemption.

But still your *Ingratitude* cannot overcome his unchangeable *Charity*. Still *He* calls upon you to approach his Banquet, and, so far from excluding you, *He* threatens you with Death if you absent yourself. This *merciful Father's* Arms are ever open to receive you: And though you appear to him a meer *Leper*, *lame*, *blind*, a *Demoniac*, and what is still worse, full of *Sin* and *Iniquity*, yet *He* flies not from you, *He* shews no Aversion: all he demands of you is, 1. To conceive a sincere Sorrow for having so shamefully offended *Him*. 2. To hate *Sin* above all Things. 3. To be ever ready to do his *Will*, with great Alacrity and Clearfulness on all Occasions. 4. To have a firm Confidence that *He* will forgive all your Debts, cleanse you from all Stain, and defend you against all your *Enemies*.

Being thus animated by reflecting on the Love *He* bears penitent Sinners, approach the holy Table with a *Fear* tempered by *Hope* and *Love*, saying: I am not worthy to receive *Thee*, after so many heinous Offences, and without making sufficient Satisfaction to thy *Justice*. No, my *God*, I am not worthy to receive *Thee*, fullied as I am with an Attachment to Creatures, and have not as yet begun to love and serve *Thee* with my whole Strength. Ah! my *God*, forget not thy wonted Goodness:

ness: be mindful of thy Promise; make me worthy through *Love* and *Faith* to receive *Thee*.

After Communion be profoundly recollected, and shutting out every thing else from thy Heart, entertain thy *Saviour* with these or the like Expressions: O sovereign *Lord of Heaven!* what can have brought *Thee* thus low, to visit a poor wretched blind Creature? His answer will be *Love*. To which you must reply: O eternal *Love!* what is it *Thou* askest of me? Nothing but *Love*, *He* will answer: I would have no other *Fire* in thy Breast but that of *Charity*. That *Fire* will extinguish the impure Flames of thy *Passions*, and inflame thy Heart, and make it a Victim of sweet *Odour* before *Me*. This is what I have long desired, and do still desire; that thou be all mine, and I all thine; which can never be, if, instead of a Conformity to my Will, thou followest thy own, ever fond of Liberty and the Vanity of this World. Know then, that what I would have *thee* do, is, to hate thyself, that thou may'st love *Me* alone, giving *Me* thy Heart in order to unite it to *Mine*, which was opened on the *Cross* for its Reception. Thou knowest who I am, and seest, nevertheless, that in some Measure I have made thee my Equal through an Excess of *Love*. When I give myself entire to thee, I ask but thee in return: be Mine, and I am satisfied: seek nothing but Me, think of nothing else, look upon and listen to Me alone, that I may be the sole Object of thy Thoughts and Desires: that thou may'st only act

in and through Me ; that my immense Greatness absorb thy Nothing, and that thus thou may'st find thy Happiness in Me, and I my Repose in thee.

To conclude, make an Offering to the eternal Father of his beloved Son, 1. In Thanksgiving for the Favour He has done in thus bestowing Him on thee. 2. To obtain what is necessary, whether it be for thyself, the whole Church, thy Kindred and Benefactors, or the Souls in Purgatory ; uniting this Offering with that our Saviour made of Himself on the Cross, when bathed in his own Blood and covered with Wounds, He offered Himself an Holocaust to his Father for the World's Redemption. For the same Intention may be offered the Sacrifice of the Mass, where-ever it is celebrated that Day throughout the Christian World.



C H A P. LVI.

Of SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

Although a *real Communion* is at the oftenest restrained to once a Day, yet you are at Liberty, as was said above, to communicate in *Spirit* every Hour ; and nothing but your own Negligence can prevent your receiving this great Benefit. And it is worth observing, that a *spiritual Communion* is sometimes of greater Advantage to the *Soul*, and more acceptable to *God*, than many *Sacramental*

tal Communions performed with little Preparation and Affection. When therefore you are dispos'd to receive the *Son* of *God* spiritually, be assured *He* is ready to give Himself thus to you for your Food and Nourishment.

By way of Preparation, turn your Thoughts towards *Jesus*, and after a little Reflection on the Multitude of your Sins, declare to *Him* your sincere Sorrow for them. Then beg of *Him*, with the most profound Respect and lively Faith, that *He* will condescend to enter your Heart, and replenish it with new *Grace*, as a Remedy against its Weakness and the Violence of its *Enemies*. Every time you mortify any of your Passions, or perform some Act of *Virtue*, take that Opportunity of preparing your Heart for the *Son* of *God*, who continually demands it of you; then addressing yourself to *Him*, beg with great Fervor the Blessing of his Presence, as the *Physician* of your *Soul*, as a powerful *Protector* to take and keep Possession of your Heart against all Opponents.

Call likewise to mind your last *Sacramental Communion*, and inflamed with the Love of your *Saviour*, say to Him: When shall I receive *Thee* again, O my *God*? When will the happy Day return? But if you desire to communicate *spiritually* with greater Devotion, begin to prepare for it over Night; and let every Mortification and each Act of Virtue you practise, tend to prepare you for receiving in *Spirit* your amiable Redeemer.

In the Morning when you awake, meditate on the great Advantages accruing from a
holy

Holy Communion, in which the Soul retrieves lost *Virtues*, recovers her former Purity, is rendered worthy to partake of the Merits of the *Cross*; and performs an Action highly pleasing to the eternal *Father*, who desires that every one should enjoy this *divine Sacrament*. From hence endeavour to excite in your Soul an ardent Desire of receiving *Him* in Compliance with his Will; and with this Disposition say: *Lord*, since I am not allowed to receive *Thee* this Day sacramentally, let thy *Goodness* and *All-mighty Power* so order it, that, cleansed from the Stain of Sin, and healed of all my Wounds, I may deserve to receive thee in *Spirit*, now, each Day and Hour; to the end that, being strengthened with new Grace, I may courageously resist my *Enemies*, especially that Failing against which, for the *Love* of *Thee*, I now wage *War*.



C H A P. LVII.

Of THANKSGIVING.

SINCE all the Good we possess or perform, comes from *God*, and appertains to *Him*; we are bound in Justice to return continual Thanks for every good *Action* done, for every *Victory* gained over ourselves; in fine, for all *Benefits*, whether general or particular, received from his *all-bounteous Hand*. And in order to acquit ourselves in a proper Manner of this Duty, let us consider for what End *He* has thus

heaped his Blessings upon us. This will shew us in what Manner *He* expects our Acknowledgments should be made.

As *His* principal Design in what *He* does for us, is to advance *his* own *Glory*, and draw us to *his* *Service*, let every one first make this Reflexion : What a Proof have I in this Benefit, of *God's* infinite *Goodness*, *Wisdom* and *Power* ! Then considering, that of himself he cannot merit so great a Favour, or rather, that through his black Ingratitude he is altogether unworthy of it, let him say with great Humility : Is it possible, O *Lord*, that *Thou* shouldest have the least Regard for the most abject of all *thy* Creatures ? What an Excess of Bounty, to heap *thy* Favours on so wretched a Sinner as myself ! May *thy* holy *Name* be for ever blessed ! In fine, as nothing more is required in return for so many signal Benefits, but that he love and serve his *Benefactor*, let him conceive the highest Sentiments of Gratitude and Affection for so good a *God*, and the most earnest Desires of a strict Compliance with his *holy Will* in all Things. For a Conclusion, he may make an entire Offering of himself to *God*, in the following Manner.

C H A P. LVIII.

Of the Offering we are to make of ourselves to God.

TWO Things are to be observed, if we desire to render this *Oblation* pleasing to *God*. The one is, to join it with all the *Offerings* which the

the Son of God made whilst on Earth : the other is, to disengage our Hearts from all Affection for Creatures.

As to the first, it must be observed that our blessed Redeemer, during his mortal Life, continually offered to the eternal Father, not only *Himself*, but all his Actions, Mankind and all their good Works. Let us therefore join our Offerings with *his*, that from such an Union they may be sanctified in the Sight of the All-mighty.

With regard to the second, let us be careful to break off all Attachment to Creatures, before we presume to offer this Sacrifice of ourselves. Consequently, if we perceive we are still entangled in the least impure Affection, let us have recourse to God, and conjure *Him* to break asunder our Bonds, that nothing may prevent our being entirely *his*. This is of very great Importance. For if he who is a Slave to Creatures, pretends to give himself -to God, does he not present that which is already engaged to another? This is mocking the All-mighty. Hence it is, that though we may have many times thus offered ourselves, as an *Holocaust*, to the Lord ; yet we have not only not advanced in the way of *Virtue*, but even contracted fresh Imperfections, and increased the Number of our Sins.

It is true, we may be allowed to make this Oblation to God, though our Hearts be not entirely weaned from the World : but then it must be done with a serious View of creating a thorough Aversion to it, and this being obtained, we may without the least Obstacle devote ourselves entirely to *his* Service. Let therefore

all our Offerings be pure and unspotted ; let not our own Wills be consulted. Let us not regard the good Things of this *Life*, let us even overlook those of *Heaven*, and have nothing in View but the sole *Will of God* ; let us adore his *divine Providence* and implicitly submit to his Appointments ; let us sacrifice every Affection of our Souls to *Him*, and, forgetting all created Beings, let us say : Behold, O my *God* and my *Creator*, the Offering I make of all that I am ; I submit my Will entirely to *Thine* : dispose of me as *Thou* pleasest as to *Life, Death, here and hereafter, in Time or in Eternity.*

If we say this sincerely from our Hearts, if we are truly thus affected, which the first *Affliction* that happens will plainly demonstrate, we may depend upon acquiring in a short Time very great Merits, of infinitely greater Value than all this World can afford ; we shall belong to *God*, and *He* be ours, since *He* always bestows *Himself* on those, who renounce themselves and all Creatures, that they may live for *Him* alone. What powerful Means must such a Practice afford for defeating our *Enemies* ? For if by this voluntary Sacrifice, we unite ourselves so closely with *God*, that we are entirely *his*, and *He* be reciprocally ours, what *Enemy* can have Power to hurt us ?

But, to enter into a farther Detail, when we offer up our *Fasting, Prayers, Patience* or other good Works, we must first call to mind the holy *Actions* of the Son of *God*, and, placing all our Confidence in their Merit, present our own to the eternal *Father*. But if we desire to offer

to

to this *Father of Mercy* the Sufferings of his *Son*, in Satisfaction for our Sins, it may be performed in the following Manner.

We must call to mind either in general or in particular the chief Disorders of our past Lives; and being convinced, that of ourselves we are unable to appease the Wrath of our sovereign Judge, or make Satisfaction to his offended Justice, we must have Recourse to the *Life and Passion* of our *Saviour*: We must remember, that when *He* *prayed, fasted, laboured, poured out his precious Blood, He offered all He did and suffered to his Father, in order to reconcile us to Him*. Behold, said *He*, how I comply with thy *Decrees*, in satisfying thy *Justice* for the Sins of such and such: Graciously grant them Pardon, and receive them into the Number of thy *Elect*.

Every one ought to join his Prayers with those of *Jesus Christ*, and conjure the *eternal Father* to have *Mercy* on him, through the *Merits* of his *Son's Death and Passion*. This may be done every time we meditate on the *Life or Passion* of our *Lord*, not only in passing from one *Mystery* to another, but also at the various Circumstances of each *Mystery*; and this whether our Prayers be offered up for ourselves or for others.



C H A P. LIX.

Of sensible Devotion, and the Affliction of spiritual Dryness.

Sensible Devotion arises either from a natural Disposition, the Artifices of the Devil, or is the Effect of Grace. From which of these Sources it springs, the Effects will discover. For if no Amendment follows, we have Reason to fear the Devil or our own corrupt Nature is at the Bottom of it; especially if too great a Satisfaction is found in it, too great an Attachment to it is indulged, or a better Opinion of one's self entertained on its Account. When therefore your Heart abounds with Joy and spiritual Comfort, be not over solicitous to discover from whence it proceeds; but be exceedingly careful to lay no Stress upon it, or cherish any better Opinion of yourself: on the contrary, be ever mindful of your own Nothingness, hate yourself the more, and break off all Attachment to created Objects, even spiritual ones, seeking God alone, and desiring to please only Him. This Conduct will change the very Nature of the Consolation you experience, and though it should at first arise from a bad Principle, it will become an Effect of Grace.

Spiritual Dryness proceeds from the Causes we have just now mentioned. 1. From the Devil, who sets all Engines at work to make us negligent,

gent, to lead us out of the Way of Perfection, and plunge us afresh into the Vanities of the World. 2. From the *Corruption* of our *Nature*, ever inclining us to Evil, to Tepidity and Sloth, and attaching our Hearts to the good Things of this Life. 3. From the *divine Grace* infused into our Souls by the *Holy Ghost*, in order to wean us from every thing which is not of *God*, or tends not to *God*; or else to convince us, that we have nothing but what we receive from *God*, to give us a greater Relish for the Gifts of *Heaven*; or to unite us still more to *Himself* by teaching us to renounce every thing else, even spiritual Consolations, lest a too great Fondness for them should divide our Affections, which are due to *Him* alone; or in fine, because He delights in seeing us behave courageously, and make a right Use of his *holy Grace*.

When therefore you find yourself oppress'd with a spiritual *Distaste* and *Dryness*, examine whether it be owing to any Fault of yours, and amend it instantly; not so much with a View of regaining that *Sweetness*, which is changed into *Bitterness*, but in order to banish every thing that is in the least displeasing to *God*. But if after an exact Scrutiny no such Fault appears, give your self no farther Concern for recovering the *sensible Devotion* you have lost, but exert yourself in acquiring *true Devotion*, which consists in an exact Conformity with the *Will of God*: desist not from your usual Exercises, but, however barren and insipid they may appear, be resolute and persevere, drinking

ing chearfully the bitter Cup, your heavenly Father presents to you.

And if besides this *Dryness*, which makes you almost insensible to *heavenly* Things, you likewise perceive your Mind labouring under heavy Clouds of *spiritual Darknes*, and incapable of resolving upon any thing; nevertheless be not discouraged; let nothing separate you from the *Cross of Christ*; disdain all *human Consolation*, vain and wretched as it is.

Be careful moreover not to discover this Affliction to any but your *spiritual Physician*, to whom it ought to be declared, not with a View to any Alleviation, but in order to learn how to bear it with a perfect Resignation to the *divine Will*. Let not your *Communions*, your *Prayers* or other *devout Practices*, be offered up for the freeing yourself from this *Cross*; but beg that your Courage may, according to his Example, fix you to it, for *his* greater Glory, even to the End of your Life.

But if your Mind be so disquieted as to be incapable of praying and meditating as formerly, yet you must persist in those Exercises with as little Anxiety as possible, and supply the Defects of the *Mind* by the Affection of the *Will*: employ vocal Prayer, and speak sometimes to *yourself*, sometimes to your *Saviour*. Such a Practice of Devotion will have surprising Effects, and afford you great Consolation in your Troubles. On such Occasions say to yourself *O my Soul, why art thou thus dejected, and why doest thou give me so much Uneasiness?* Put thy Confidence in God, for I will still sing his Praises; because

because He is my Saviour and my God. Why art Thou retired from me, O Lord ? Why doest Thou condemn me when I stand most in need of thy Assistance? Abandon me not for ever ! Psalm xlvi. 51. Call to mind the pious Sentiments with which *God* inspired *Sarah the Wife of Toby* in her Affliction, and say with *her* in the same Spirit, not only in Mind but in Word : *My God, all who serve Thee, know that if they are visited with Trials of Affliction in this Life, they will be rewarded : if oppressed with Affliction, they shall be delivered : if punished by thy Justice, they hope in thy Mercy. For thou delightest not in seeing us perish : Thou sendest a Calm after Storms, and Joy after Mourning, O God of Israel, be thy Name for ever blessed.* *Toby* iii. 21.

Represent to yourself your *Saviour* in the *Garden* and on Mount *Calvary*, abandoned by *Him* whose beloved and only Son *He* was ; carry the *Cross* with *Him*, and say from the Bottom of your Heart : *Not my Will, but Thine be done.* Thus by joining *Patience* with *Prayer*, you will acquire *true Devotion* by the voluntary Sacrifice you make of yourself to *God*. For, as I have said before, *true Devotion* consists in a ready and resolute Will to follow *Christ* loaded with his *Cross*, where-ever *He* is pleased to lead us ; in loving *God*, because worthy of our Love ; and in quitting the Sweetness of *God* for *God's Sake*. And if Numbers of those who profess *Piety*, would bring spiritual Advancement to be measured by this Standard, rather than by the Sweets of *sensible Devotion*, they would not be so much deceived as they are by a false Judgment

ment of Things, nor the Artifices of the *Devil*: they would not be so very ungrateful as to murmur against their *Lord*, and unjustly complain of the Favour *He* does them, in giving Opportunities for the Exercise of their Patience; on the contrary, they would exert themselves in serving *Him* with greater Fidelity than ever, being persuaded that *He* permits every thing for the greater Advancement of his own *Glory* and our *Salvation*.

There is another dangerous Illusion, to which Women especially are often exposed, who detest *Vice*, and are assiduous in avoiding the Occasions of *Sin*: But if the *unclean Spirit* molests them with wicked and abominable Thoughts, or perhaps excites in their Imagination horrible Visions, they are dejected, and despond under the Apprehension that *God* has forsaken them. They cannot conceive that the *Holy Ghost* will dwell in a *Soul* filled with impure Thoughts. Thus they abandon themselves to **Afflictions**, and a kind of Despair: so that half conquered by the Temptation, they begin to think of desisting from their Exercises of Devotion, and return to *Egypt*; blind as they are, they see not *God's Goodness* in permitting them to be tempted, in order to prevent their falling into any Negligence, and to force them by the Effects of their own Wretchedness, to unite themselves more closely with *Him*. It is therefore the greatest Ingratitude to complain of that, for which they ought to thank without ceasing the *divine Mercy*,

On such an Occasion we ought to weight well the perverse Propensity of our corrupted Nature. For God, who best knows what is for our Advantage, would make us sensible, that of ourselves we tend to nothing but Sin ; and if not supported by Him, we should continually fall into the greatest of Miseries. After this we must excite ourselves to a due Confidence in his divine Mercy, being persuaded, that since he has been pleased to open our Eyes to the Danger we are in, He designs to free us from it, and unite us by Prayer more strongly to Himself. This deserves our most grateful Acknowledgments.

But to return to those wicked Thoughts which are involuntary ; it is certain, that they are put to flight much sooner by a patient Resignation to the Anxiety they occasion, and a speedy Application of the Mind to something else, than by a tumultuous and violent Resistance.



C H A P. LX.

Of the Examination of Conscience.

IN examining your *Conscience*, three Things are to be regarded. 1. The Faults committed that Day. 2. The Occasions of those Faults. 3. Your Disposition to begin anew in amending your Faults, and acquiring the contrary Virtues. With regard to the Faults committed that Day, you are to recollect what

I have directed to be done *Chap. 27.* where you will find all that is to be performed after falling into Sin. As to the Occasions of Sin, you must resolve to avoid them with the greatest Caution and Circumspection. Lastly, as to the Amendment of these Faults, and the Acquisition of the requisite Virtues, you must fortify your Will by a firm Confidence in *God*, by Prayer and frequent earnest Desires of breaking off all ill Habits, and acquiring such as are commendable.

But if you find that you have gained some *Victory* over yourself, or performed some *good Action*, be upon your Guard, beware of *vain Glory*. I would not even advise you to dwell too long on the Remembrance of it, lest *Presumption* and *Vanity* take that Time to steal into your Heart. Leave therefore your good Works, whatever they be, in the Hands of the *divine Mercy*, and think of nothing but doing your Duty with greater Fervor for the future. Be mindful of giving *God* most humble Thanks for the Assistance you have received from *Him* that Day: Acknowledge that all Good comes from *Him*; and in particular return Thanks for *His* having defended you from numberless *Enemies*, both visible and invisible; for the manifold good Thoughts He bestowed, and the Occasions offered of practising Virtue; and for a Thousand other Benefits you cannot discover.



C H A P. LXI.

In what Manner we must persevere in the Spiritual Combat till Death.

A MONG other Things requisite for succeeding in the *Spiritual Combat*, *Perseverance* is justly reckon'd; a Virtue through which we apply without ceasing to the Destruction of our *disorderly Inclinations*, whose Duration is the same with our Lives, never failing to shoot up and spread in our Hearts, like rank Weeds in a fertile Soil. It is in vain to think of putting an End to this *War*, it cannot end but at our Deaths, and whoever ceaseth to fight, must give up his Liberty or Life. Alas! how should he avoid being overcome, when attacked by *Enemies* devoted to his utter Destruction, and whose *Malice* increases, the more this *Friendship* is sought? Nevertheless, be not daunted with their Strength and Number, for in this sort of *Fight* no one is conquered but he that surrenders; neither have your *Enemies* a greater Power than your *Leader*, for whose Honour you engage, is pleased to allow them. Be assured *He* never will suffer you to fall into their Hands; *He* will be your Champion, *He*, who is infinitely superior to them all, will crown you with *Conquest*, provided that fighting his Battle, you place all your

Q Confidence,

Confidence, not in your own strength, but in his All-mighty Power and sovereign Goodness.

But if *He* seems slow in succouring you, if *He* permits you to be exposed to Danger, yet be not discouraged: let your *Faith* be stedfast, and with the following Consideration animate yourself to the *Combat*; believe, I say, that *He* will so order every thing, that all which seems an *Obstacle* to your *Glory*, will turn out to your *Advantage*. For your part, let your *Resolution* and *Fidelity* be seen; never desert your *Leader*, who for your sake did not shrink from *Death* itself, and by dying conquered the *World*; fight courageously under his Standard, and quit not our *Arms* while there is one *Enemy* left. For if you spare¹ but one, if but a single *Vice* is neglected, it will ever be an *Eye-sore*, an *Arrow* fixed in your *Breast*: and as it will encumber you in the *Fight*, it will consequently retard your *Victory*.



C H A P. LXII.

*In what Manner we must prepare for engaging those
Enemies by whom we shall be attacked at the Hour
of Death.*

Although this mortal Life be a continual Warfare, yet it is very certain, that the last Day of *Battle* will be the most dangerous; for he who loses that decisive Day has nothing left to trust to. In order therefore not to perish

rish at that Juncture without Resource, endeavour to inure yourself to the *Combat*, while God gives you opportunities; for he that fights valiantly during Life, will gain the *Victory* in his last Moments, thro' his accustomed Conquests in the fiercest Assaults.

Besides think frequently on *Death*: for that will much diminish the Terror of it when at hand: your Mind will be more at Liberty, and better prepared for the *Combat*. *Worldlings* banish this Thought as troublesome and unseasonable, lest it should destroy the Pleasures this Life affords, and being unwilling to entertain so vexatious a *Reflexion*, as that which tells them they must one Day part with all they now hold so dear. Thus their Affections are more strongly riveted to this World every Day. And thence it comes, that the leaving this Life, and all that is dear to them, is a Torture the more insupportable, the longer they have enjoyed such Delights.

But in order to be prepared for that terrible Passage from *Time* to *Eternity*, imagine yourself sometimes all alone, no Assistance to be had, and the Agonies of *Death* pressing upon you; consider attentively the following Particulars, which will give you the most Uneasiness, and imprint deep in your Mind the *Remedies* I shall propose, that you may employ them when the Time of *Extremity* is at hand; for it is absolutely necessary to know that Lesson well, which is to be performed but once, lest an *irreparable* Fault be committted, and an *Eternity of Misery* be the Consequence.

C H A P. LXIII.

Of four kinds of Temptations usual at the Hour of Death: And first of those against Faith, and the Manner of resisting them.

THE Enemies of our Salvation generally assault us at the Hour of Death with four Kinds of dangerous Temptations. 1. With Doubts against *Faith*. 2. With Thoughts of *Despair*. 3. With Thoughts of *vain Glory*. 4. With various *Illusions* employed by these *Ministers of Darkness*, transformed into *Angels of Light*, for our Destruction.

As to the first Sort, if the *Enemy* should offer any captious and fallacious Argument, be sure not to enter into any Dispute with him; let it suffice to say to him, with a holy Indignation: Be gone, *Satan*, Father of Lies; I will not hear thee: My Belief is no other than that of the *holy Roman Catholick Church*.

Be likewise on your Guard against any Thoughts which may offer themselves as conducing to strengthen your *Faith*; reject them as Suggestions of the *Devil*, who seeks to disturb you, by insensibly engaging you in a Dispute. But if you cannot free yourself from such Thoughts, and your Head is full of them, still be resolute, listen not to his Arguments, not even to those Passages of *Scripture* he may possibly

fibly alledge. For however clear and direct they may seem, yet he will certainly quote them wrong, maim or misapply them.

If therefore the *Fiend* should ask you what the *Church* believes, make no Reply : but as you know his Design is to surprize you, and wrangle on some ambiguous Word, content yourself with making one general Act of Faith : or, if you are desirous to mortify him still more, answer, that the *Church* believes the *Truth* ; if he presses to know what is the *Truth*, tell him, it is what the *Church* believes. Take especial Care that your Heart be inseparable from the *Cross*, and say to the *Son of God* : O my *Creator* and *Redeemer* ! come immediately to my Assistance, and depart not from me, lest I wander from the *Truth* *Thou* has taught me ; and since *Thou* hast favoured me with being a Member of thy *Church*, grant I may die such to Thy greater Glory.



C H A P. LXIV.

Of Temptations to Despair, and how they are to be resisted.

THE second Temptation which the *Enemy* throws in our Way, is a vain Terror which he endeavours to strike into us, and make us despair at the Sight of our past Sins. If you perceive yourself in any Danger of this

Kind, take it as a general Rule, that the Remembrance of former Crimes proceeds from the divine Grace, and is salutary, if it tends to form in you Sentiments of Humility, Compunction, and Confidence in God's Mercy. But know likewise, that it certainly is suggested by the Devil as often as it creates Vexation and Despondency; leaving you spiritless and daunted, from the strong Reasons it offers to make you believe, you are lost without any Hopes of Salvation.

Think of nothing, in such Circumstances, but of humbling yourself, and placing a greater Confidence than ever in the boundless Mercy of our Lord: This will entirely defeat the Devil's Stratagem, as it turns his own Weapons against him, and gives greater Glory to God. It is true, you ought to be truly contrite for having offended such sovereign Goodness, as often as you call to mind your past Iniquities; but you ought at the same Time to ask Pardon with a firm Confidence in your Saviour's Merits. Even though it seems as if God said in your Heart, you are not of the Number of his Flock, still you must not cease to hope in Him, saying with great Humility: *Lord, thou hast too much Reason to reject me and punish my Sins to all Eternity;* but still I have greater Reason to hope *Thou wilt manifest thy Mercy in me.* I beseech Thee therefore to spare a miserable Wretch, who deserves indeed to be for ever banished from Thee, but yet is the dear Purchase of thy precious Blood. I desire to be saved, O blessed Redeemer, that I may bless Thee for ever in thy Glory: all my Hopes are in Thee; to Thee do

I abandon myself entirely ; dispose of me as Thou pleaseſt, who art my ſovereign Maſter ; diſpoſe I ſay as Thou pleafeſt : but however that be, I will hope in Thee, though Thou ſhouleſt condeſtm me this very Instant.



C H A P. LXV.

Of Temptations to vain Glory.

THE third Kind of Temptation is *vain Glory*. Dread nothing ſo much as giving the leaſt Way to an Opinion of yourſelf and your good Works. Take no Glory but in our Lord, and acknowledge that all is due to the Merits of his *Life* and *Death*. To the utmoſt Verge of Life, look upon yourſelf only with Hatred and Contempt : Let your *Humility* increase every Moment, and never ceaſe giving Thanks to God, as the Author of all the Good you have ever done. Beſeech Him to ſuccour you ; but beware of esteeming his Afſiſtance to be the Reward of your Merits, even though you may have gained the moſt ſignal Victories over yourſelf. Be ever in Fear, and confeſſ ingenuouſly, that all your Endeavours would be vain, unless God, in whom is all your Hope, crowns them with Success, follow this Advice, and reſt ſecure that your *Enemies* cannot hurt you.

C H A P.

C H A P. LXVI..

Of various Illusions employed by the Devil at the Hour of our Death.

If the *Enemy* of our Salvation who never ceases to persecute us, should, under the Appearance of an *Angel of Light*, endeavour to deceive you with *Illusions*, imaginary, or even real *Visions*, still remain firm in the Knowledge of yourself, and say boldly to him: Avaunt, wretched *Fiend*; return to thy dark Abodes from whence thou camest; for I am too great a Sinner to deserve *Visions*; I seek nothing but the Mercy of my *Jesu*, the Prayers of the blessed *Virgin*, St. *Joseph* and the other Saints.

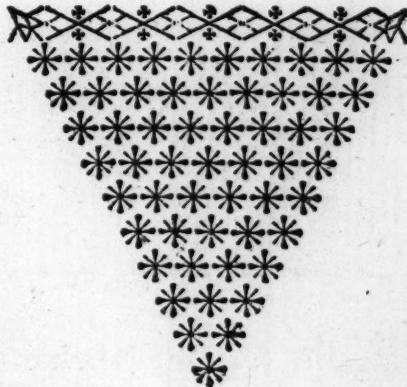
But if it appear almost evidently that such Things are from *God*, be sure you do not too easily give them Credit; be not afraid of rejecting them: such Resistance, founded as it is on a Sense of your own Wretchedness, must be highly acceptable to *God*; and if *He* is the Author of what you experience, He will not fail to convince you that it is so, without any Detriment to you; since *He* that gives his *Grace* to the *Humble*, will not deprive them of it, when they humble themselves before *Him*.

Such are the Weapons the *Enemy* usually employs against us in general, when our last Moments draw near: but besides this, he at-

tacks

tacks each one in particular where he knows they are least able to resist. He studies our Inclinations, and through them draws us into *Sin*. Wherefore, before the Hour of the great *Combat* approaches, let us take *Arms* and make *War* on our prevailing Passions, that we may with less Difficulty resist and conquer them in the Time, which will be to us the last of all Time. *Ye shall fight against them till they be utterly destroyed,* 3 Kings xv.

T H E E N D.





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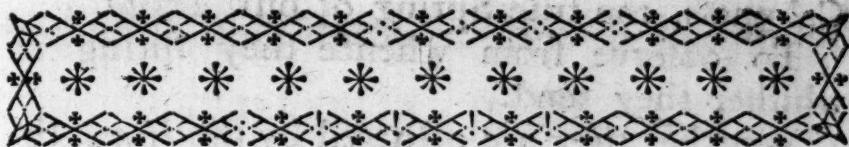
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OF THE
 P E A C E of the S O U L
 AND THE
 HAPPINESS of a HEART,

Which *dies to itself* in order to *live to G O D.*



C H A P. I.

*Of the Nature of Man's Heart, and the Manner
 of governing it.*

GO D created the *Heart* of Man to no other End than to love *Him* and be beloved by *Him* again. The Excellence of this End of its Creation, ought to convince us, that *it* is the most noble and most excellent Work of his Almighty Hand.

On the Government of *this* alone, depends our *spiritual Life and Death.*

The Art of governing *it* must needs be very easy, since *its* true Character is to act through *Love*, and do nothing by *Force.*

All

All we have to do is to watch, with great Calmness, the true Spring of our Actions.

To observe from whence they spring or whither they tend.

Whether they are actuated by the Heart, the Source of *divine Love*; or by the *Understanding*, from whence arises human *vain Glory*.

You will discover, that it is the *Heart*, which influences you in your good Works, through a Motive of *Love*, when all you do for *God*, seems little, and after doing your very best, you are ashamed of having done so little.

But you may conclude, that your Actions proceed from the *Understanding* moved by worldly Motives, when your good Works, instead of producing *meek* and *humble* Sentiments, leave nothing behind them but the *Illusions* of *vain Glory*, puffing you up with a false Notion of having performed Wonders, when in Fact you have done nothing that is Praise-worthy.

Man's *Warfare*, mentioned by *Job*, consists in watching thus continually over ourselves.

This is to be performed without the least Peevishness or Anxiety; for what is aimed at, is to give Peace to the *Soul*, to calm and appease its Motions, when troubled or disturbed in its Operations or Prayers. For we may be assured, in such a Condition, Prayers will be very indifferently said, till the *Soul* be freed from all Uneasiness.

Know that this may be effected by a single Emotion of *Mildness*, which is the only Means of remedying this Disorder and restoring her former Tranquility.

C H A P. II.

How careful the Soul ought to be in acquiring perfect Tranquility

THIS mild, peaceable, and especially constant Attention to all the Motions of the Heart, will easily produce wonderful Effects: for we shall not only *pray* and *act* with great Facility and Peace, but even suffer, without repining, what occasions the greatest Disturbances, *Contempt* and *Injuries* themselves.

Not but that to acquire this *external Peace*, we must necessarily undergo much Labour, and our want of Experience will expose us to the Assaults of powerful domestick *Enemies*: But this we may depend upon, that if we are not afraid of the Encounter, we never shall want Assistance and Consolation in this *Combat*; that our *Enemies* will grow weaker and their Powers be dispersed, whereas our Command over our Affections will increase, and we shall procure for our Souls that precious Repose, in which their Happiness on this Side the Grave alone consists.

If it should happen that the Emotion be too strong to be assuaged, or the Weight of Affliction too heavy to be borne, let us have Recourse to *Prayer*; let us pray, and this without ceasing. *Jesus* prayed three times in the *Garden*, to teach

R

us

us, that *Prayer* is the Refuge and Solace of every *afflicted Mind*.

Let us pray continually, till we find all quiet within our Breasts, our *Will* submissive to *that of Heaven*, and our *Soul* restored to its former Tranquility.

Let us not suffer ourselves to be disturbed by any Hurry of Busines: Whenever our Minds or Bodies are at work, let it be done with all Sedateness and Composure, not tasking ourselves to a fixed Time, or being too eager to see it finished.

One principal *Intention* ought to preside over all our Actions, that is, to be ever mindful of *God's holy Presence*, with great Humility and Peace, only solicitous how to please *Him*.

If we suffer any other Consideration to interfere, our *Souls* will soon abound with Disquiet and Anxiety; we shall often fall, and the Difficulty of recovering ourselves, will convince us, that all our Evils proceed from acting on all Occasions in Compliance with our own Will and Humour; and which likewise, when Success attends us, fills us with vain Satisfaction, and, when disappointed, leaves us overwhelmed with Uneasiness, Trouble and Vexation.



C H A P. III.

That this peaceable Habitation must be built by Degrees.

Banish from your Mind whatever may tend to elevate, depress, or discompose it : endeavour with great Mildness to acquire or preserve its Peace : for *Jesus Christ* hath said : Blessed are the Peaceable ; learn of me, for I am meek and humble of Heart. Doubt not that *God* will crown your Labour, and make your Soul a Dwelling of Delight ; all *He* asks of you is, that as often as the Emotions of your Senses and Passions molest you, you would speedily endeavour to disperse the Clouds, to calm and appease the Storms, and make Peace once more smile on your Actions.

As a House cannot be built at once, so is not this Acquisition of interior Treasure to be made in an Instant.

But the Perfection of this Work, depends essentially on two Things ; the one is, that the Hand of *God* himself prepares his Habitation in you ; the other, that *Humility* be the Foundation of the Building.

C H A P. IV.

That to attain this Peace, the Soul must relinquish all human Consolation.

THE Path which leads to this *Peace*, incapable of being disturbed, is almost unknown to the World. In it, Tribulation is as earnestly sought as Pleasure by *Worldlings*; there Contempt and Derision are pursued, as Honours and Glory are by *ambitious Men*; there as great Pains are taken to neglect and be neglected, to forsake and be forsaken by all Men, as the Children of this World take to be sought for, caress'd and esteem'd by Kings and Princes.

But *there* the holy Ambition, with all Humility, is to be known, regarded, comforted and favoured by God alone.

The *Christian Soul* learns *thereto* converse only with *God*, and to be so strongly fortifyed by *his Presence*, that *she* is willing to suffer every thing for *his Sake*, and for to promote *his Glory*.

There is learnt that Suffering blots out Sin, and that an Affliction supported in a proper Manner is a Treasure laid up for *Eternity*, and that to suffer with *Jesu Christ* ought to be the only Ambition of a *Soul*, which seeks the Glory of resembling *Him*.

There is taught that to love ourselves, to follow one's own Will, to obey our sensual Appetites,

Appetites, and to destroy ourselves, is one and the same Thing.

That our *own Will* is not even to be indulged in what is commendable, till we have submitted it to *that of God* in all Simplicity and Humility of Heart ; that what his *divine Majesty* appoints, and not our *Inclinations*, may be the Rule of our Actions.

We often perform good Works from wrong Motives or through our indiscreet Zeal, which, like a false Prophet, appears to be an innocent Lamb, but in reality is a ravenous Wolf.

But the *devout Soul* will discover the Illusion by its Fruits : when she finds herself in Trouble and Anxiety, her Humility diminished, her Composure disturbed ; when she no longer enjoys her Peace and Tranquility, and sees that all she had attained with much Time and Labour, is vanished in an Instant.

We may sometimes fall in this Road, but this serves only to increase our Humility, which assists us to recover, and to watch more strictly over ourselves for the future.

Perhaps *God* permits us to fall, in order to root out some secret Pride our Self-love hides from us.

The Soul may sometimes be molested with Temptations to Sin ; but she must not disturb herself on this Account, she must withdraw quietly from them, without Solicitude, and reinstate herself in her former Tranquility, without indulging either Joy or Sorrow in Excess.

In a Word, all we have to do is this, to keep our Souls in Peace and Purity in the

Sight of *God*; we shall find *Him* in our own Breasts, and know by experience that *his Will* appoints every thing for our greater Good.



C H A P. V.

That the Soul ought to keep herself in Solitude and disengaged, that God's holy Will may operate in her.

IF we are sensible how great a Value we ought to set upon our Souls, a Temple designed for the Habitation of *God*: let us take Care that nothing of this World intrude itself there, placing our Hope in the *Lord*, and waiting with a firm Confidence his Coming: *He* will certainly enter, if *He* finds it alone and disengaged; alone, having no Desire but of his *Presence*; alone, loving only *Him*; in fine alone, void of all other Will but that of *Heaven*.

Let us do nothing to please ourselves, that we may merit the Presence of *Him*, who surpasses the Comprehension of all created Beings.

Let us follow exactly the Steps of our Guide: let us not without his Advice, embrace either Suffering, or good Works to offer to *God*.

It suffices to keep our Minds ever ready and willing to suffer, for love of *Him*, what *He* pleases, and how *He* pleases.

Whoever Acts of his own Accord, would do better to remain in Peace, attentive to what

what the divine *Majesty* shall perform in him.

We must not suffer our *Will* to entertain any Engagement, but to be always free.

And since we ought not to Act according to our Desires, let us be persuaded not to desire any thing ; or if we do, let it be in such a Manner, that in case of a Disappointment, our Minds be as undisturbed as if we had desired nothing.

Our Desires are our Chains ; to be entangled with them, is to be Slaves : but to have none, or not to be Subject to them, is to be free.

God demands our Souls, *alone, void* of all Engagements, that *He* may manifest his Wonders in them, and in a Manner glorify them in this Life. O holy Solitude ! O happy Desert ! O glorious Hermitage, where the Soul may so easily enjoy its *God* ! Let us not only run thither, but beg the Wings of the *Dove* that we may fly to it, and find a holy Repose ; let us not stop by the Way, let us not lose Time in frivolous Discourse with any one ; let us leave the Dead to bury their Dead, we fly to the Land of the Living, and have nothing to do with Death.

C H A P. VI.

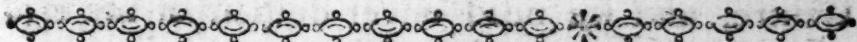
That Prudence must guide our Love of our Neighbour, that it may not disturb the Peace of our Souls.

GOD dwells not in a Soul, which He does not enflame with the Love of *Himself*, and Charity for others : *Christ* said, *He* came to set the World on Fire.

The Love of *God* must have no Bounds; but *Charity* for our Neighbour must have its Limits: We cannot love *God* too much, but we may exceed in the Love of others; for if it be not duly regulated, it may prove our Ruin : We may destroy ourselves in seeking to save others. Let us therefore love our Neighbour in such a Manner as not to hurt our own Souls : this is best secured when we do nothing with the sole View of setting them a good Example, as Models for their Imitation, lest in endeavouring to save them, we throw ourselves away : let us perform our Actions with great Simplicity and Sanctity, and with the sole View of pleasing *God*, humbling ourselves and acknowledging, that as our good Works contribute so little to our own Advantage, they can be of little Service to others. It is not required of us to be so zealous for the Salvation of others, as to destroy the Peace of our own Souls.

We may have that ardent Thirst for their Illumination, when *God* shall please to give it us ;

us; but we must wait for it from *his Hand*, and not vainly imagine it is to be acquired by our Solicitude and indiscreet Zeal: Let us secure to our Souls the Peace and Repose of a holy Solitude; such is the Will of *God* in order to bind and attach us to *Himself*: Let us remain recollected within ourselves, till the Master of the *Vineyard* hires us: *God* will clothe us with *Himself*, when *He* finds us strip'd and divested of all earthly Solicitude: *He* will be mindful of us, when we have entirely forgot ourselves; Peace will reign in our Breasts, and his *divine Love* will put us in Action without Disquiet, will give Moderation and Temperance to our Motions, and thus we shall perform every thing in the holy Repose of that Peace of Love, in which even Silence is eloquent; and to hold ourselves free and susceptible of *God's Operations*, is to do every thing. For it is *his divine Goodness* which must work in us and with us, without requiring any more of us, than with great Humility to present *Him* a Soul, void of every Desire but this one, that his holy Will be accomplished in her, in the most perfect Manner possible.



C H A P. VII.

That our Souls must be divested entirely of their own Will in order to be presented to God.

COME to *Me* all ye that labour and are oppressed, if ye would rest from your Toil; and

and all ye that thirst, if ye would be refresh'd. Such are the Words of Christ in two places in the Scripture : Let us follow this divine Summons, but without Violence or Precipitation, in Peace and Mildness, referring ourselves with great Respect and Confidence to the *endearing All-mighty Power*, which calls upon us.

Let us wait in the Spirit of Peace, the coming of that Spirit which gives Peace ; let us think of nothing but the Means, by which He may be desired, loved and glorified, entirely resign'd and obedient to what He shall appoint.

We must not use Violence with our Heart, lest, if it should prove stubborn, it be render'd incapable of that holy Repose, we are commanded to acquire.

But let us accustom it by Degrees to contemplate nothing else except the Goodness, Love, and Benefits, which God exercises towards his Creatures, and to nourish itself with that delightful *Manna*, which a Frequency of such Meditations will shower down upon our Souls with unspeakable Sweetness.

Let us not strive to shed Tears, nor to excite Sentiments of Devotion which we have not : Our Hearts must repose in *God*, as in their Centre, and we need never despair of the *Will of God* being accomplished in us.

He will bestow on us the Gift of Tears when it is proper, but then they will be mild, humble, affectionate, and peaceable : by these Marks you will discover the Source from whence they spring, and receive them as Dew from Heaven, with all Humility, Reverence and Gratitude.

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Let us not presume to know, to have, nor to desire any thing : the Beginning and End, the Corner-stone and Key of the spiritual Building, is not to depend in the least on ourselves, on what we know, what we desire, or what we possess ; but remaining in a State of perfect Self-denial, like *Magdalen* at the Feet of *Jesus*, without busying ourselves like *Martha*.

When you seek *God* by the Light of your *Understanding*, to repose in *Him*, it must be done without comparing *Him* to any thing, without Bounds or Limits ; for *He* is beyond all Comparison, *He* is every where without Division and contains all Things in *Himself*.

Conceive an *Immenſity* without Limits, a *Whole* which cannot be comprehended, a *Power* which has made and still supports all Things, and then say to your Soul, Behold thy *God*.

Contemplate and admire *Him* without ceasing. *He* is every where, *He* is in your Soul, in her *He* places his Delight, as *He* has declared ? and Although *He* stands not in need of her, *He* is pleased to make her worthy of *Himself*.

But in searching after these *divine Truths* by your Understanding, let them be the Resting-Place of the mild and peaceable Affections of your Will.

You are neither to neglect nor limit your Devotions, tying yourself down to so many Prayers, so much Reading or Meditation ; but let your Heart be at Liberty to stop where it finds a Resting-Place, and always ready to enjoy its *Lord*, whenever *He* pleases to communicate *Himself* to you, without being in any Concern for

for not having finished what you had begun : abandon the rest without Scruple, taking no Thought on this Subject ; because the End of your Devotion being to enjoy *God*, as that is accomplished, the Means are of no farther Signification for the present.

God leads us by that Way which *He* has chosen, and if we oblige ourselves to such or such particular Exercises which we fancy, and thus lay imaginary Obligations on ourselves, we expect to find *God* when we are in reality running from *Him* ; we pretend to please *Him*, without conforming to his Will, and put ourselves out of a Condition of being disposed of according to his Pleasure.

If you desire to advance in this Path with Success, and attain the End to which it leads, seek and desire *God* alone, where-ever you find *Him*, there stop, go no farther : whilst *He* is pleased to remain with you, enjoy in his Company the Repose of Saints ; and when his *divine Majesty* pleases to retire, then you may by pursuing your Devotions, endeavour to find *Him* again, earnestly desiring to succeed ; which when done, you are to abandon every thing, that you may the more perfectly enjoy *Him*.

This Advice is of the greatest Importance, and well deserves our Attention in practising it : for we see many *Churchmen*, who waste themselves with the Fatigues of their Employments, without reaping any Advantage or Repose for themselves ; because they imagine they have done nothing, if they leave their Task unfinished, wherein they place Perfection ; they act like

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like Journeymen, bound to obey the Dictates of their own Will, but never attain true *interior Peace*, the Dwelling of the *Lord* and *Sanctuary of Jesus Christ*.



C H A P. VIII.

Of the Faith we ought to have in regard of the blessed Sacrament, and how we are to offer ourselves to God.

OUR Faith and Love in regard of the *holy Eucharist* must continually increase, growing stronger every Day, and become more naturaliz'd to us.

Let us approach it with a Will prepared to undergo all Afflictions, Tribulations, Weakness, and spiritual Dryness for his holy Sake.

We must not ask *Him* to change *Himself* into us, but that we may be changed into *Him*.

Let us not entertain *Him* with pompous Speeches; Admiration and Joy ought to engage our Souls, and swallow up all their Functions when *He* is present: our *Understanding* must be employed in admiring this incomprehensible Mystery, and our Heart melt away with Joy at the Sight of such immense Majesty under such simple Veils.

Let us not desire *Him* to manifest *Himself* to us, remembering that *He* hath declared, Blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed.

Above all let us be constant and punctual in our Devotions, and continually practise those Means which will most contribute to purify and adorn our Souls with a peaceable and mild Simplicity.

While these Methods are pursued, the Grace of Perseverance will never be wanting to us.

A Soul which has once tasted this spiritual Repose, can never return to the Hurry of a worldly Life; it is impossible she should ever bear the Torment of it.



C H A P. IX.

That the Soul ought not to seek either Repose or Pleasure but in God.

ASoul which relishes nothing this World affords, but its Persecutions and Disgraces; which never loves nor desires any thing it can bestow, nor dreads all it can inflict; which flies the *former* as a deadly Poison, and covets the *latter* as the greatest Delight; such a Soul, I say, may expect all Consolation from God, provided her whole Confidence is in *Him*, without presuming the least on her own Strength. The Courage of St. Peter was very great, when he declared his Resolution of dying with Christ: such a fixed Will was in all Appearance very commendable, but in reality was very defective, in being his own Will, which was the Occasion of his shameful Fall: so true it is, that we can neither

neither propose nor execute any Good, unless supported by the *All-mighty Power of God.*

Let us preserve our Souls entirely free from all Desires, that nothing may impede her Operations, ever present in all she does or thinks, not suffering any Concern of what she has to do or resolve on, except in the present Instant, to give her the least Disturbance.

Nevertheless, every one is to apply himself to his temporal Affairs, with a prudent and commendable Solicitude, suitable to what his State of Life requires: Such Business rightly managed, is according to the divine Appointments, and does not interfere with our internal Peace and spiritual Advancement.

We can do nothing better towards rightly employing the Time present, than to offer our Soul, entirely divested of all Desires, to *All-mighty God*, and standing before *Him*, like a weak languishing Wretch, incapable of doing any thing for himself.

In this Freedom of Mind, disengaged within, and depending altogether on *God*, consists the very Essence of Perfection.

It is impossible to conceive, how tender the divine *Goodness* is of those who are thus entirely devoted to *it*.

It is pleased with their shewing a Confidence without Reserve: *It* delights in enlightening them, in resolving their Difficulties, in raising them when fallen, and forgiving their Offences as often as they are truly penitent: for *God* is still the Priest *for ever*, and though *He* has given to *St. Peter* and his Successors the Power

of loosing and binding, *He* has not divested *Himself* of the same ; so that if these cannot have Recourse to their *Confessors* as often as they desire, the *divine Majesty* receives them to his Mercy, pardoning their Sins whenever they approach *Him* with due Confidence, a perfect Sorrow, and an entire Love.

Such are the Fruits of this holy Disengagement.



C H A P. X.

That we ought not to be dejected at the Obstacles and Repugnance we find in attaining this interior Peace.

GO D is often pleased to permit this interior Serenity, this Solitude of the Soul, this Peace and holy Repose of Heart, to be disturbed and over cast with the clouds and Emotions arising from our Self-love and natural Inclinations.

But as his *Goodness* permits it for our greater Good, *He* will not fail to bestow the refreshing Showers of his divine Consolation on this Dryness, which will not only lay the Dust, but enrich it with Fruits and Flowers worthy the Regard of his *divine Majesty*.

These Interruptions of our Tranquility, occasioned by the Emotions of our sensitive Appetites, are those very Combats, in which the

Saints

Saints have gained Victories worthy of immortal Crowns.

Whenever you fall into such Weaknesses, Disgusts, Troubles and Desolations of Mind, say to *God* with an humble and affectionate Heart : *Lord*, I am the Work of thy own Hands, and the Slave redeemed by thy precious Blood; dispose of me as entirely thine, made for *Thee* alone and permit me only to hope in *Thee*, Thrice happy Soul, who thus offers itself to *God* in time of Affliction !

And though perhaps you cannot immediately bend your Will to an entire Submission to *God*, you must not be dejected ; it is your *Cross*, which *He* commands you to take up and follow *Him*. Did not *He* carry one, to shew how you ought to behave ? Contemplate the Combat *He* underwent in the Garden ; when *He* struggled with his human Nature, whose Weakness made *Him* cry out, *Father*, if it be possible let me not drink of this Cup ; and his *Soul*, rising above the Weakness of the Body, immediately subjoined, with a most profound Humility : Let not my Will, but *Thine* be done,

Perhaps the Weakness of Nature may make you avoid all Trouble or Affliction, and when it happens, you may shew your Dislike, and wish it at a Distance.

But notwithstanding, be sure you persevere in Prayer and Acts of Humility, till you find no other Desire nor Inclination, but that the *Will of God* be accomplished in you.

Endeavour that *God* alone may dwell in your Heart, that there be no room for Bitterness,

Gall, or voluntary Repugnance to what God shall appoint; never look upon or consider the Failings of others, but pursue your Way, regarding nothing but how to avoid what may hurt your Conscience; the great Secret of belonging entirely to *God*, is to neglect and pass by every thing else.



C H A P. XI.

Of the Artifices employed by the Devil to disturb the Peace of our Souls; and how we may defeat them.

THE Enemy of Mankind endeavours chiefly to withdraw us from a State of *Humility* and *Christian Simplicity*.

To effect this He inclines us to presume a little on ourselves above others, which is soon followed by a Contempt of them for some supposed Failing.

He steals into our Souls by some of these Means; but his greatest Inclination is to enter them by the Door of Vanity and Self-love. The Art of defeating him is to keep closely intrenched in holy Humility, never forsaking it in the least; to confound and annihilate ourselves; if we abandon that State, we shall never defend ourselves against this *proud Spirit*, who, if he once gets possession of our Will, is sure to play the Tyrant and introduce every Vice into our Souls.

Neither will it suffice to watch, we must also pray:

pray: For it is said, Watch and Pray. Peace of Mind is a Treasure, which cannot be secured, unless thus guarded.

Let us not suffer our Minds to be afflicted or disturbed on any Account whatever. The humble and peaceable Soul does every thing with great Facility; before her all Obstacles vanish; her Conduct is holy, and she perseveres in it; but the Soul which suffers herself to be disquieted, performs few good Actions, and those very imperfect ones, is soon weary, continually suffers, but her Sufferings are of no Advantage.

You will discern whether Thoughts ought to be encouraged or banished, by the Confidence or Diffidence they inspire, to be placed in the *divine Mercy*: If they dictate that this affectionate Confidence ought to encrease continually, you are to look upon them as Messengers from Heaven, entertain and take a Delight in them; but you must reject and banish, as the Suggestions of *Hell* itself, all such as tend to make you in the least diffident of his *infinite Goodness*.

The *Tempter* of pious Souls often magnifies their failings; he endeavours to persuade them they do not comply with their Duties; that their Confessions are imperfect, their Communions tepid, their Prayers deficient; and thus with various Scruples he keeps them in perpetual Alarms, seeking to draw them from their Exercises, as if *God* did not regard, or had entirely forgot them: than all which nothing can be more false: For the Advantages arising

ing from Distinctions, spiritual Dryness, and the like, are very numerous, provided the Soul comprehends and complies with what *God* expects of her in those Circumstances, that she exercise her Patience, and persevere in her good Works; for the Prayers and Exercises of a Soul, deprived of all Satisfaction in what she does, is the Delight of the *All-mighty*, according to *St. Gregory*; especially, if notwithstanding she is cold, insensible, and as it were absent from what she does, yet she persists in it with Courage, her Patience prays sufficiently for her, and will prevail more with *God*, than any Prayers said with the greatest sensible Devotion. The same *Saint* adds, that the interior Darknes with which her Devotion is surrounded, shines bright in the Presence of *God*, that nothing we do can sooner draw *Him* to us, and even compels *Him* to bestow new Graces upon us.

Never quit therefore any Work of Piety, how little Relish soever you may possibly find in it; unless you would comply with what the *Devil* desires; and learn from the following Chapter, the great Advantages which may be reaped through an humble Perseverance in Works of Piety, when attended with the most irksome spiritual Barrennes.

C H A P. XII.

That our Souls must not be afflicted at internal Temptations.

THE Fruits which spring from spiritual Barrenness, and even from Faults committed in our Devotions, are certainly very great; but it is only through Humility and Patience, that we reap the Benefit of them: Were we thoroughly Masters of this Secret, we should prevent many uneasy Days and unhappy Hours.

Alas! how mistaken are we in thinking ourselves forsaken and abhorred by God All-mighty, from the precious Tokens of his divine Love, and to fancy his *Anger* punishes us when we are highly favoured by his *Goodness*. Don't we see that the Uneasiness which arises from such interior Barrenness, can only spring from a Desire of being altogether acceptable to *God*, zealous and fervent in what regards *his Service*, since what afflicts us is nothing but a Want of such Sentiments, from whence we imagine we displease *God*, as much as we are displeasing to ourselves: No, no, we may be assured that it is a good Effect from a good Cause; such Trials never happening but to those who desire to live like the faithful Servants of *God*; avoiding not only what may offend, but even what may be disagreeable to *Him*.

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On the contrary, we seldom hear great Sinners, or even those who live according to the Maxims of this World, complain of such kind of Temptations.

It is a Remedy, not very palatable indeed, and such as we are apt to set ourselves against, but of wonderful Efficacy, though we do not perceive it: Let the Temptation be dreadful, even to that Degree as to terrify us with the bare Thought of it, the greater our Afflictions and Humiliation, the greater Advantage we shall reap. This the Soul does not comprehend, and therefore declines a Path which presents nothing but Crosses and Afflictions.

Which is as much as to say, she is unwilling to be deprived of Delight and Consolation, and that whatever is not attended with such Sweetness, she esteems no better than lost Labour.



C H A P. XIII.

That God sends these Temptations for our Good.

WE are naturally proud, ambitious, and indulgent to our Senses; hence it is we are apt to flatter ourselves on all Occasions, and set a much greater Value on what belongs to us than we deserve.

But such *Presumption* is so great an Obstacle to our spiritual Progress, that the least Tincture of

of it, though never so small, will hinder us from attaining true *Perfection*.

It is an Evil undiscernable by us, but *God*, who knows its Nature, and loves us, is ever careful to undeceive us, to awake us from the Lethargy of *Self-love*, and bring us to a true Knowledge of ourselves. Did *He* not deal thus with St. *Peter*, when *He* permitted that Apostle to deny *Him*, and forswear any Knowledge of his *Lord*, that he might return to the Knowledge of himself, and lay aside his dangerous Presumption? Did *He* not likewise deal in the same Manner with St. *Paul*, when in order to secure him from this Bane of our Souls, and from making a wrong Use of the sublime Revelations with which he had been favoured, he was exposed to a shameful Temptation, which continually reminded him of his own Weakness?

Let us admire the *Goodness* and *Wisdom* of *God*, who thus opposes us for our Good, and highly favours us when we least perceive it, even when we imagine *He* hurts us.

We are apt to think this Tepidity arises from our Imperfections and Insensibility in regard of *God*: We are easily persuaded that no one is so distracted and forsaken as ourselves; that *God* has no such wretched Servants as we are; that none but Miscreants have their Minds filled with Thoughts like ours.

Thus, by the Effects of this *heavenly Medicine*, is this presumptuous Person, who had so good an Opinion of himself, brought to think no

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one so bad, or so unworthy the Name of *Christian*.

Would he ever have descended from those lofty Sentiments to which his *Pride* had raised him? Would he have been ever cured of his *Haughtiness*? Would such Fumes of *Vanity* ever have been banish'd his Head and Heart, without this Remedy?

Neither his *Humility*, the only Advantage we receive from such kind of Temptations, Afflictions, and interior Desolations, which leave the Soul thus Disconsolate, and deprive it of all the sensible Delights of Devotion: for besides, they compel us to have Recourse to *God*, to fly every thing displeasing to *Him*, and to apply ourselves with greater Diligence to the practice of *Virtue*. Such Afflictions are a kind of *Purgatory*, which cleanse us and bring Crowns of Glory, when received with *Humility* and *Patience*.

The Soul being convinced of what has been said above, may judge whether she ought to lose her *Peace*, and grieve at being deprived of a Relish for Devotion, and surrounded with interior Temptations; whether it be reasonable to attribute to the Malice of the *Devil*, what comes from the Hand of *God*, and to mistake the Tokens of his Tenderness for Marks of his Indignation.

All she has to do on such Occasions, is to humble herself in the Sight of *God*, to persevere and bear with Patience the Disgust she finds in her Exercises of Devotion, conform herself to the divine *Will*, and endeavour to preserve

serve her Tranquility, by humbly acquiescing to what *He* is pleased to appoint, since it is the Will of *Our Father which is in Heaven.*

Instead of shrinking with Sorrow and Dejection, she ought to break forth into fresh Acts of Thanksgiving, establishing herself in Peace and Submission to the Appointments of Heaven.



C H A P. XIV.

How we are to behave with regard to our Faults.

IF it should happen that you commit a Fault in Word or Deed, give way to Anger, interrupt your Devotions out of some vain Curiosity, indulge immoderate Joy, entertain suspicious Thoughts of your Neighbour, or are guilty of any other Failing, even often, though it be the same Fault and such as you have resolved against; you must not be disquieted, nor let what has passed make too deep an Impression, so as to afflict and deject you, fancying you shall never amend, that you do not perform your Exercises in a due Manner, or that if you did, such Faults would not be so often repeated; for all this is an Affliction of Spirit, and a Loss of Time which you ought to avoid.

Neither ought you to dwell too long in sifting the several Circumstances of your Fault, whether it was indulged for any Time, whether you fully consented to it or not; because all this only serves to fill your Mind with Vexations,

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both before and after *Confession*, as if you could never say enough, nor in the Manner it should be expressed,

You should not be so much molested with these Vexations, were you well apprised of your own Weakness, and how you ought to behave in regard of *God All-mighty* after committing such Faults. Not with Anxiety and Dejection of Mind, which only disturbs and sinks the spirits; but by turning to him with great Humility and Affection: And this is to be understood not only of smaller Failings, but likewise of greater Faults; not only of such as are occasioned by Sloth and Indevotion, but even through Malice itself.

This is not sufficiently understood by many; for instead of practising this great Lesson of filial Confidence in the *Goodness and Mercy of God*, their Spirits are so wasted that they are almost incapable of thinking of any Good, and lead a wretched languishing Life, by preferring their own weak Imaginations to sound and wholesome Doctrine.

C H A P. XV.

That the Soul should recover her Tranquility, and not lose Time with every Vexation which happens.

LET therefore this be your Rule as often as you are guilty of any Fault, great or small, though repeated many times the same Day, as soon

soon as you perceive what you have done, to consider your own Weakness and have recourse to God with an humble Heart, saying to *Him* with a calm and amiable Confidence: *Thou hast seen, O my God, that I did what I could; Thou seest what I am, Sin can produce nothing but Sin:* As *Thou* hast given me Grace to repent, I beseech thy *Goodness*, to add to my Pardon the Grace never to offend Thee more. This Prayer being finished, spend no Time in anxious Thoughts whether *God* has pardoned you or not, but with great Humility and Calmness proceed in your Devotions, without reflecting any farther on what has happened, exciting the same Confidence and Tranquility of Mind as before. And this Method is to be observed, as often as the Fault is repeated, though it were a thousand times, after the last time as well as after the first: For besides that thus we return immediately to *God*, who like a tender Father is always ready to receive us as often as we come to *Him*, we likewise avoid losing time in Vexation and Solitude, which only discompose the Mind, and prevent its resuming its usual Calmness and Fidelity.

I heartily wish that those, who disquiet themselves and grow disconsolate on their committing Faults, would study well this *Spiritual Secret*; they would soon comprehend how different their State is from an humble chearful Mind, where Peace and Tranquility reigns, and how prejudicial to their Souls the Loss of so much Time in Anxiety must necessarily be.

THOUGHTS on DEATH.

Every Moment of our Lives we stand on the
Brink of Eternity.

*Twelve Advantages arising from the Contemplation
of Death.*

I. IT enables us to judge properly, and prevents our being imposed on in all Affairs,
Vera Philosophia.

Naked we were born, and naked we leave this World, why then should we scrape up Riches?

No one to accompany us, to what Purpose then are we so fond of Creatures?

The Stench and Corruption of our Carcasses, which will serve to pamper Worms and Vermin in the Grave, cures us of the Folly of carnal Pleasures.

This wretched Situation under Ground among Companions not worthy to behold the Light, trampled on by the meanest Beggar, will free us from the Vanity of seeking Preference above others.

II. It is the best Instruction thro' Life, laying down but one plain Rule, to direct all our Actions to our last End,

This Consideration drives away all the busy troublesome Insects this Life is pester'd withal : it keeps us steady in our Course, and supports us on our Journey.

III. It

III. It teaches us to despise all this World can possible afford, peoples Deserts and Cloisters, and is the Retirement of all true Servants of God.

IV. It teaches us to know ourselves, one of the chief Points of *true Wisdom*.

V. It is like Ice, and helps to chill and deaden the Fire of Concupiscence; it is a Bridle which curbs our sensual Appetites.

VI. It is a continual Source of Humiliation, a specifick Remedy against Pride and Vanity.

VII. It is an excellent Preservative against Sin. *In all thy Works be mindful of thy last End, and thou shalt never sin.* Eccl. vii.

VIII. It brings exasperated Minds back to Peace and Reconciliation: Whoever considers seriously that a certain and unavoidable Death will one Day place him before that Judge, who shews no Mercy but to those who pardon others, he will easily be induced to forgive.

IX. It is an Antidote against the Pleasures and Vanities of the World: Thus the Prince, who placed the *Comedian* in a crazy Chair over a large Fire, told him very justly, seeing his Apprehension and Uneasiness lest the Seat should fail, that he ought to consider *Life* to be like a decay'd Chair, which every Hour, nay every Moment might fall to pieces; and the Fire under him to represent *Hell*, into which every one ought to dread falling a Victim.

X. It teaches us a provident Economy with regard to our Salvation, by setting before our Eyes that we are to dwell eternally elsewhere than in this transitory Life; and consequently ought

ought to lay up a Treasure of good Works while we have it in our Power.

XI. It induces us to embrace with great Chearfulness a *penitential Spirit*.

XII. It encourages us to persevere in it with great Steadiness.

Of PENITENCE.

IT is the only Way left us to return to God. when separated from Him by Sin.

There is a *Penitence of Heart*, and an *Active Penitence*; the one *affective*, the other *effective*; they must be united as the several Circumstances of our Condition require.

An *active or effective Penitence* is to be put in Practice when Sickness and any involuntary Affliction befalls us, or when through a *penitential Spirit* we punish ourselves.

We practise it when in Afflictions:

As often as we receive them with this Intention, that being Criminals in the Sight of God, we look upon them as a Punishment justly sent by a *tender Parent* for our Amendment; or a *merciful Judge*, who inflicts a Penalty in this *Life* in order to spare us in the *next*. In a Word, as often as we confess our Sins with true Repentance, and receive the Punishment with due Submission.

In order that these two interior Acts may make the deeper Impression on our Hearts, it will not be improper to accompany them with the following Reflections.

That if the Crimes for which we are punished were to be weighed against what we suffer, how light would the *latter* be in Comparison with the *former*.

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That what we endure is by the especial Appointment of God.

That his Design in sending it is our Advantage, in satisfying by it for our Offences.

That it is in order to remind us of our Wickedness ; since we seldom think on it before we feel the Hand of God.

That if by the Sacrament of Penance we are already restored to a State of Grace, this Affliction is sent us as a Means of satisfying the divine Justice for the temporal Punishment due to our Sins,

That the Punishment due to *mortal Sin* unrepented of, is eternal Damnation, Fire never to be extinguish'd, and an irrevocable Banishment from God.

That Millions have perished, who perhaps were guilty but of one *mortal Sin* after *Baptism*, and many of them surprised by Death the Moment it was committed.

In order to apply these Truths to our own Case, when any Affliction befalls us, we ought to retire into the Closet of our Hearts, and reason thus with ourselves :

Is it not an Article of Faith, that when I committed the first *mortal Sin* after *Baptism*, my Portion from that Moment ought to have been with those like myself, the Reprobates in *Hell*? Alas ; my God, how many Years should I have already passed in that Place of Horror ? If I reckon from the first mortal Sin, what must I not have suffered in that fiery Furnace to this Time, and what might I not expect to suffer for all Eternity ? It is through thy Mercy alone,

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O my God, that I was not there from the first Moment I deserved it, that I am not there at this Instant, that I may still hope never to come there, and that Thou hast not dealt with me, as Thou hast with those miserable Wretches who now burn there for all Eternity.

Instead of those horrible and ever-enduring Torments, from which Thou hast graciously exempted me, thou art pleased to send this Affliction; and yet I murmur, am impatient, and untractable.

What I suffer, cannot last long; what I have deserved, is eternal.

An *active Penitence* is exercised by depriving ourselves of any Satisfaction of Body or Mind, with an intention of making some Atonement to the divine *Justice*; by bearing patiently any Contempt or Injury, and offering it to the All-mighty in Expiation of our Crimes.

Affective Penitence of the Heart.

This is acquired by Grace and our Co-operation: *The Grace of God with me.*

The Means appointed by Providence for obtaining Grace, is to ask it; *Ask and ye shall receive.* Let us pray and labour to obtain it.

How we are to ask it.

By forming repeated Acts frequently every Day.

By Words, suitable to the Affections God is pleased to give us, saying: my God, why did I ever offend Thee: and why, since I have been so miserable do I not conceive a Sorrow for it, equal to that of the greatest Penitents? Alas! to forfeit my *Baptismal Grace*, purchased with thy

thy sacred Blood ! What Ingratitude on my Side ! What gracious Mercy on Thine to pardon such a Wretch !

I now discern, O my God and Father, the Excelts of thy Love, by thy incredible Patience in my Regard ; Thou didst spare to crush me into nothing, when I audaciously rebelled against Thee.

The Words of the devout Penitents expressed in the Holy Scriptures will best suit the Occasion. *O God, be merciful to me a Sinner.* *Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee ; I am not worthy to be called thy Child.* *Against Thee alone have I sinned, and done Evil in thy Sight.* *A contrite and humble Heart Thou wilt not despise ;* and the like.

How we are to labour to obtain it.

Let us consider attentively those Motives, which are most likely to affect our Hearts.

The infinite Goodness of God, the evident Marks of which, we ourselves are.

The greatness of his divine Majesty, which has no Want of us.

The Severity of his just Vengeance, which might at once destroy us for ever.

Let such Books be consulted as treat of these Subjects.

Let us sigh and bewail in the Presence of God for having offended Him, if these Reflexions move our Hearts ; but if they remain inflexible, let us sigh and bewail their Insensibility.

Let us beg of the divine Goodness with the Samaritan Woman, the Water of Life ; Lord

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give me this Water ! One penitential Tear can disarm the Anger of Heaven.

When you ask your *celestial Father* to give you your daily Bread, remember to pray for the *Bread of Tears*; that ought to be the daily Bread of Sinners.

This *Grace* is to be implored by Actions, as well as Aspirations.

When you are moved to perform some good Action, as an Alms, Fasting, some penitential Work, or to deprive yourself of any Diversion, offer it to *God*, beseeching *Him* to bestow on you what of yourself you are unable to attain, a *Spirit of Penance* and sincere Contrition for your Offences.

Read over once a Week on a set Day these Reflections; for example, on the Saturday or Sunday.

Make it a Rule, if you desire to succeed, every day to set apart half an Hour to be spent in reading some pious Book, under these two Regulations; the first is, to chuse such Books as will most efficaciously stir up a penitential Spirit in your Heart; the other, to weigh with great Attention such Passages as seem to affect you in particular, and lead you to an interior and affective *Spirit of Penance*.

Assist every Day at the *Sacrifice of the Mass*, the principal Object of Devotion for a *penitent* Heart, since *JESUS CHRIST* is there offered for our Sins, and to merit Grace for our Necessities; join with the Priest in offering it to *God* for this End.



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